SERMONS

ON

Several SUBJECTS,

BY

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SERMON

SERMON I.

Against Persecution for Religion.

LUKE xiv. 23.

And the Lord said unto the Servant, Go out into the High-ways and Hedges, and compel *them to come in, that my House may be filled.*

MY Design in the following Discourse, is 1*st* to explain distinctly the *true* Meaning of these words of our Saviour; and 2*dly* to show, to what an *impious* sense they have sometimes been perverted, by men of corrupt and ambitious minds in the *Romish* Church.

I. *First*; OUR Saviour, in This Parable, compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a * *King making a Marriage-feast for his Son*; To which the Guests *first invited*, were the *Jews*, God's original peculiar people, to whom the Gospel was *first* preached: But They, upon sundry trivial Excuses, refusing to come to the Feast; and going carelessly elsewhere, one to his Farm, another to his Merchandize; that is, the *Jews* adhering to the vain Traditions of their Elders,

* Mat. xxii. 2. Luke xiv. 16.

and refusing to embrace the doctrine of the Gospel; *The Master*, thereupon *being angry, said to his servant* ver. 21. *Go out into the streets and lanes of the City, and bring in hither the poor and the maimed, and the lame and the blind*; That is, as our Saviour elsewhere explains it, * *Verily the* publicans *and the* harlots *go into the kingdom of God before* you; For *the publicans justified God*, Luke vii. 29. that is, obeyed God's invitation to Repentance; *But the Pharisees and Lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves.* After this, there being *still* room, *the Lord said unto the servant*, in the words of the Text, *Go out into the high-ways and hedges, and* compel *them to come in, that my house may be filled: Go*, not only into the streets and lanes of the City; but also *out of* the City, *into the high-ways and hedges*; that is, go even among the *Gentiles*, Aliens from the commonwealth of *Israel*, strangers as yet to the covenant of Promise, and invite *Them* to come in: According to That explication given by our Saviour in another place, † *Many shall come from the East and from the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of God, and the children of the Kingdom shall be shut out.* Go, and *compel* them to come in; that is, not by *Force of Arms*, but by the force of *Perswasion* and earnest *Entreaty*: For so in this very parable, recorded by St. *Matthew* §; the words which we find *here*, compel *them to come in*; are *there*, only, *go into the high-ways, and* bid *them to the marriage.* The word, *compel*, is *more emphatical*; expressing very affectionately the *greatness* of God's *Goodness*, or his *earnest and sincere Desire* of mens Salvation. And

* Mat. xxi. 31. † Mat. viii. 11. § Mat. xxii. 9.

because

because in This place, 'tis, by the Nature and Circumstances of the whole Discourse, an expression of such *Goodness* only, and not of *Severity*; an invitation of men to a *Feast*, and not a dragging them to *Punishment*; This therefore evidently shows, what *sort* of compulsion it is, that must here be understood to be meant. For there are many ways of *compelling*, in the figurative and moral Sense, very different from compulsion by *Force of Arms*. *Perswasion* and *Arguments*, compel men; *Importunity* and *Earnestness*, compel; *Promises* and *Threatnings*, *Hopes* and *Fears*, compel; *Kindness* and *Gratitude*, have a compulsive force; and *Reasons strong and clear*, though they offer *no violence*, are yet, in the *moral* sense, to understanding and unprejudiced persons, *irresistable*. And in the *Scripture*, as well as in *common-speech*, is the word, *compelling*, very frequently thus used. Men are in the sacred Writings said to be *compelled*, sometimes by *importunity*: *Gen.* xxxiii. 11. *Jacob* urged *Esau*, (in the original it is, he *forced* him,) to receive his present, and he received it. 1 *Sam.* xxviii. 23. Saul's *servants with the woman*, compelled *him*, (that is, prevailed with him by their importunity,) *and he hearkned to their Voice, and did eat.* 2 *Kings* iv. 8. *The Shunamite* constrained *Elisha*, (in the *Hebrew* it is, *compelled him,) to eat bread.* So likewise in the *New Testament*, Matt. xiv. 22. *Jesus* constrained *his Disciples*, (in the original 'tis the very same word with that in the Text, he *compelled* them,) *to get into a ship.* *Luke* xxiv. 29. When Jesus *made as though he would have gone further*, the Disciples *constrained* him, (in the *Greek* it is, *forced* him; that is, not by *violence*, but by *perswasion* they forced him, to *go in and tarry with them.* And *Acts* xvi. 15. the woman con-

strained us to go into her house; It is again, in the original, the same word, *forced* them; which yet is directly explained in the very same verse, to have been done only by her importunity in *beseeching* them. In *other* places, *Diligence and Industry* is represented as a sort of *Compulsion*, Matt. xi. 12. *From the days of John the Baptist until Now, the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth* Violence, *and the* Violent *take it by* Force: The Meaning is, what St. *Luke* expresses in the parallel place, ch. xvi. 16. *The Law and the Prophets were until John; Since that time, the Kingdom of God is preached, and every man* presseth *into it*; that is, the Gospel is now preached *publickly* and *universally*; and even the *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*, are *diligent* to understand and receive it. Sometimes *necessary* business is described as *compelling* men; that is, *such* business, as either they *cannot*, or fancy *they cannot*, without great inconvenience, neglect. Thus in this very Parable, in the words just before the Text, one of the guests first-invited is introduced making This excuse, *I have bought a piece of ground, and I must* needs *go and see it*; In the original it is the very same word, as in the Text itself, I am *compelled* to go and see it. And another answers immediately after; *I have married a wife, and therefore I* cannot (the *Greek* is, *I am not* able, to) *come*. In *some* places, men are said to be *compelled*, by having an *earnest* desire *of mind* to do a thing; *Job* xxxii. 18. *I am* full *of matter, the Spirit within me* constraineth *me:* And in *other* places, they are compelled by *Fear and* Distress *of mind*; 1 *Sam.* xiii. 12. *Saul*, being in distress, forced *himself therefore*, contrary to his duty, *and offered a burnt-offering*. Sometimes strong and unanswerable *Reasons*, compel men: *Job* vi. 25.

How

How forcible *are right words!* Sometimes, a *Sense of* Duty, compels men as it were *against* their own Inclination: 1 *Pet.* v. 2. *Feed the Flock of God, not by* constraint, *but willingly*; And 2 *Cor.* ix. 7. give, not as of *necessity*, but *cheerfully*. At *other* times, men are represented in Scripture, as *compelled* by *fair and deceitful Speeches*; Prov. vii. 21. *With much fair Speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her Lips she* forced *him*. Or, by *Error, and the Prevalency of a False Opinion or Doctrine*: Gal vi. 12. *As many as desire to make a fair shew in the Flesh, they* constrain *you*, (here again the original has the very *same* word, as in my Text; they compel you) *to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer Persecution for the Cross of Christ*: And *Gal.* ii. 14. *Why* compellest *thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?* namely, by *persuading* them of the Necessity of Circumcision? Or, by the *Perverseness of* Others, men are sometimes said to be *compelled*, for the conviction of such gainsayers, to do things which they would otherwise dislike: *Gal.* ii. 3. *Neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was* compelled *to be circumcised*: *And That because of false brethren, unawares brought in,——to spie out our Liberty*; And 2 *Cor.* xii. 11. *I am become a Fool in glorying*, ye *have* compelled *me, viz.* by your ill behaviour. Or, by mere *Custom* sometimes, are men represented as compelled: *Luke* xxiii. 17. *Of* necessity *he must release One to them at the Feast*; that is, as St. *Matthew* expresses it in the parallel place, * *he was* wont *to release One* at That Time; or, in St *John*'s words, † *they had a* Custom, *that One should then be*

* xxvii. 15. † xviii. 39.

released. Lastly, by the *willing* and *agreeable* compulsion, of *Love and Gratitude* powerfully working, in the motions of a free and generous Mind; are men elegantly said to be *compelled:* 2 Cor. v. 14. *The* Love *of Christ,* constrained *us.* And not of *Men* only, but even concerning *God himself* also, is the like figure of speaking sometimes used in Scripture: *Is.* lxii. 7. *Ye that make mention of the Lord, give him* No Rest, *till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a Praise in the Earth.* Here the holy Spirit represents God, in a most wonderful way of condescension, suffering himself to be *compelled* as it were, by the *importunate* Prayers of good men. And the same thing is still more lively set forth, in the History of *Jacob*'s striving with the Angel, *Gen.* xxxii. 24. where our Translation improperly expresses it by his *wrestling* with the Angel; But the Sense is; the Angel made as if he would have departed from him; but *Jacob* held him, and strove with him, and pressed him *importunately* for a Blessing, saying, *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me*; Whereupon he blessed him, and said, ver. 28. *As a* Prince *hast thou Power with God and with Men, and hast prevailed.* Which matter, the prophet *Hosea* thus sets forth, ch. xii. 3 *By his Strength he had Power with God; yea, he had Power over the Angel, and prevailed; he* wept, *and made supplication unto him:* The *Strength* (says the Prophet,) by which *Jacob prevailed over the Angel,* was his *weeping and making supplication unto him.* From these, and numerous other the like expressions in Scripture, as well as from the Nature and Reason of the thing itself, it is evident beyond controversy, that when our Lord in the Text, bids the Preachers

of

of his Gospel, go into the highways and hedges and *compel* men to come in; his meaning is not, *Compel them by Force of Arms*; but, compel them by irresistible Clearness of Reason, by Strength of Argument, and affectionate Admonition; convince, persuade, intreat them; set before them the Certainty of a Future Judgment, the Promises, and the Threatnings of the Lord; prevail with them by your own good Example; urge, press, inculcate upon them the Necessity of Religion: * *Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine:* According to That of St *Paul*, 1 Th. ii. 10. *Ye are witnesses,—how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves among you; As you know also, how we* exhorted, *and* comforted, *and* charged *every one of you, as a Father doth his children; That ye would walk worthy of God who has called you unto his Kingdom and Glory.* This is evidently the *true* and *full* meaning, of these remarkable words of our Saviour in the Text. It remains that I proceed now in the

II. *Second* place to show, to what a wicked Sense they have sometimes been perverted, by men of corrupt and ambitious Minds in the *Romish* Church. Compel *them to come in:* That is, (in *Their* explication,) *compel them by violence and Force of Arms*, by racks and tortures, by Dragoons and Inquisitions, by Fire and Sword. As if the Religion of Christ was intended to divest men of common humanity, and the Service and Glory of God could really be promoted by the Destruction of Mankind: As if Religion, whose Great End is Peace and Love, the

* 2 Tim. iv. 2.

universal

universal Reconciliation of men to God and to each other, could itself be propagated by the highest Oppressions, and most inhumane Cruelties: and be made to authorize and to sanctify such Practices, the preventing whereof is indeed the very chief Design, of All Religion both Natural and Revealed. But to be more particular.

1*st*; IT is originally, in the very *nature of things*, inconsistent and absurd, to think that a right Sense of Religion can be put into mens Minds by Force of Arms. For *What* is Religion, but such a Perswasion of Mind towards God, as produces Obedience to his Commands; arising from a due *Sense* of him in the *Understanding*; a just *Fear and Love* of him in the *Affections*; and a *Choice or Preference* of Virtue in the *Will*? Now to attempt to influence the *Will*, by *Force*; is like applying *Sounds* to the *Eyes* in order to be *Seen*, or *Colours* to the *Ears* in order to be *Heard*. The Absurdity, in Both cases, is exactly the Same; For as nothing affects the *Eyes*, but *Light*; nor the *Ears*, but *Sounds*; so nothing affects the *Understanding* and the *Will*, but *Reason* and *Perswasion*. A man's *external* Acts, *may* indeed be *compelled*, or may be *restrained*, by *Force*; And, in many cases, 'tis very *fit* they should be so: But the *inward* Acts of the Mind, *cannot* be forced; nor is it *possible* for a man to be *compelled*, *against* his Will, to fear God, and be sincerely religious. A Robber or Murderer *may*, and *ought* to be, restrained by Force, from killing or pillaging his Brother; And This is the very End for which Providence appointed Magistracy and Government in the World: But the man is not therefore at all the more religious in the Sight of *God*; because his hands are in Chains.

'Tis

'Tis the *Heart* properly, that is the Seat of Religion; and where *That* concurs not, the *outward action* is of no consideration in the Sight of God. What is it then, that men can be compelled to by Force, in matters of Religion? Nothing but *Hypocrisy*, nothing but a *mocking of God.* That which *our Saviour in the Text* would have men compelled to, is a *good Heart*, and a *sincere Mind*; and therefore the compulsion here spoken of, must needs be that which compels, not the *Body*, but the *Mind*; And This, 'tis evident, can be no other, than *strong Reason* and *powerful Persuasion*; Meekness, and Charity, and good Example. For which reason, when the Guests were all come in, who are here by our Lord said (in this Sense) to have been *compelled* to the Feast; yet the man who had not on the Wedding-garment of righteousness, was not *forced* to *put one on*, but was cast out into outer-darkness for coming in *without one.* God himself, whose Power is infinite, yet *compels* and over-rules no man in matters of Morality: He invites, he exhorts, he intreats; But if they will not be *drawn by these Cords of a Man*, these proper Motives to rational Creatures; then, * *He that is unjust*, saith he, *let him be unjust still*; *and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still*; And † *He that heareth, let him hear*; *and he that forbeareth, let him forbear*: His § *Spirit will not strive with them*, by any other than rational and moral Motives; by which if they *will not* be led to obey him, then he ‡ *gives them up unto their own Heart's Lust, and lets them follow their own imagination.* All our Saviour's preaching,

* Rev. xxii. 11. † Ezek. iii. 27. § Gen. vi. 3.
‡ Ps. lxxxi. 12.

was

was with This Declaration; * *He that hai Ears to hear*, let *him hear*; and St *Paul* in like manner, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 38. *If any man* be *ignorant*, (after all reasonable means of instruction,) let *him be ignorant*. Nay indeed, to suppose that even the Power of God, *can* compel men in moral matters; is a manifest inconsistency in the nature of the *thing*. For the *essence* of religion or virtue, consists in the *free choice* of the Will; So that to *compel* a man in *this* case, by taking away his freedom; is indeed *destroying* the *Faculty itself*, or *removing* the *Subject*, in which Virtue was to reside. Wherefore the utmost that the Scripture ever represents God doing in this matter, is what is express'd, *Ps.* lxxxi. 13. O *that my people* would *have hearkened unto me! that Israel had walked my Ways!* and *Is.* v. 4. *What* could *have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it?* But

2*dly*, As *Force* is *inconsistent* with the nature of *Religion* in *general*; so is it much *more* opposite, to the Spirit of *Christianity* in *particular*. Our *Saviour's whole* Life and Character was, that *he went about, doing good*; humble and lowly, meek and merciful, and *exhorting* Sinners to Repentance; 'till at last he was led, as a *Lamb*, to the Slaughter. *If ye* will *be my Disciples*; *If any man* will *come after me*, was his stile in *inviting* men to receive the Gospel; Will *ye also go away*, was his manner of *expostulation*: *Blessed are the* meek, *Blessed are the* merciful, *Blessed are they which* are persecuted, (not they which *persecute*;) was his constant *Doctrine*: A *New*, a *particular*, a distinguishing *Commandment*, *give I unto you*; *Love* one another, *love even your* Enemies,

* 1 Cor. xiv. 38.

love

love even your Persecutors: *By* This *shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have* love *one to another:* To *love* God *with all your Heart, and your* Neighbours *as your selves,* these are *the first and* great *Commandments*; And if any man desires to distinguish the Preachers of *Truth* from the Teachers of *Errour,* by these *Fruits* (saith he) *shall ye know them:* Lastly, when some of his Disciples, with too high a Spirit of Zeal, would have *called for fire from heaven,* upon the *Samaritans* who contemptuously rejected their Master; though they were far from massacring them with their own hands, and desired only to have the *unerring* righteous judgment of *God* executed upon them, yet *he reproved them, saying,* * *Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man came not to destroy mens Lives, but to save them.* Accordingly, in the first and uncorrupt Ages, *such* also was the Manner of the *Apostles* teaching, in imitation of their Master: † *Hereby know we,* saith St *John, that we are in Him: If a man say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar; for he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* And St *James:* § *Who,* says he, *is a wise man? let him show his Works with* meekness *of Wisdom: But if ye have bitter envyings and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the Truth: For this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish: But the Wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good Fruits:* For, ‡ *the* Wrath *of*

* Luke ix. 55. † 1 John ii. 5. iv. 20.
§ James iii. 13. ‡ Ch. i. 20.

Man,

Man, (and, much *more*, the *Cruelty* of Man,) *worketh not the righteousness of God.* St *Paul* likewise, tho' in his natural Temper the *most* zealous of All the Apostles, yet declares, that the very End * *of the Commandment, is Charity*; that tho' a man should speak † *with the* Tongues *of Men and Angels*, and had Faith *to remove Mountains*, and Zeal *to give his Body to be burned*, and Liberality *to bestow all his goods to feed the Poor*, and *had not Charity*; that is, universal Love, Temper, and Good-will towards Mankind; it would *profit him nothing*. And accordingly he exhorts Christians, to put on *bowels of mercy, kindness, meekness; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; And above all things put on* Charity, *which is the bond of Perfectness*, Col. iii. 12. Charity, the Bond of Perfectness; That is; Not Unity of Opinion in the Bond of Ignorance, or Unity of Practice in the Bond of Hypocrisy, but Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace. And, with regard to *Unbelievers*, 2 Tim. ii. 24. *The Servant of the Lord*, says he, *must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in* meekness, (not with Fire and Sword) *instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the Truth.* Particularly, in the case of an unbelieving *Wife*, he commands the Husband not to try to bring her over by ill usage and force, but by *kindness only* and good example; for *what knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy Wife?* 1 Cor. vii. 16: And Husbands *that obey not the word*, 1 Pet. iii. 1. *may also without*

* 1 Tim. i. 5. † 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

the

the word be won by the conversation and good example *of the Wives while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with Fear.*

DID the Professors of Christianity universally follow these Precepts of their Master and his Apostles, so that the *Labourers* were as *many* as the *Harvest* is *Great*; the whole world would soon be *filled with the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea:* And the *Gospel*, from a *grain of mustard-seed*, according to our Saviour's parable, would have waxed into a great Tree; which (in the Psalmist's expression) * *having taken deep root, had filled the Land; The Hills were covered with the Shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedar-trees; She stretched out her branches unto the Sea, and her boughs unto the river:* Or in the Prophet *Daniel*'s phrase, ch. iv. 11. *The Tree grew and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto Heaven, and the Sight thereof to the End of all the Earth; The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit Much; and in it was Meat for all; The Beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the Fowls of the Heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all Flesh was fed of it.* Thus would the Gospel certainly be propagated, did its Professors every where promote it according to their Master's direction, and practise it in the Love thereof. But if the Gospel of Peace, be *itself* turned into an occasion of hatred and violences; *the Name of God* must needs *be blasphemed among the Gentiles, thro' Us, as it is written*, Rom. ii. 24. † If the *Salt itself has lost its Savour, wherewith shall things be seasoned?* § If the *Eye*, which is the *Light* of the

* Psalm lxxx. 9. † Mat. v. 13. Mark ix. 50. § Mat. vi. 22. Job. x. 22.

Body, be *itself* Confusion, *wherewith* shall a man's steps be directed? *If the very* Light *that is in thee, be darkness,* (as our Saviour expresses it.) *how great is that Darkness?* If a man's *Religion itself* be *wickedness,* how *great* must his Wickedness be?

3*dly,* As *Force* is inconsistent with the Nature of *Religion in general,* and still *more* opposite to the Spirit of *Christianity in particular*; so it is in Scripture, still *further,* made the *distinguishing character of the great Apostacy* foretold by Christ and his Apostles. As, in the *literal Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar* commanded, that whosoever would not worship the King's golden Image, should be cast into the fiery furnace; so the description of *spiritual Babylon* is This, that *whosoever will not worship the Beast's Image,* that is, profess the idolatrous religion of false Christians, *shall be killed,* Rev. xiii. 15. Our Saviour foretold his Disciples from the *Beginning,* that * *he came not to send Peace on the Earth, but Fire* and *a Sword*; that *the Brother should deliver up the Brother to death, and the Father the Child*; *yea, the time cometh,* saith he, † *that whosoever* killeth *you, will think that he doth* God *Service*; *And these things will they do, because they have neither known* Me, *nor my* Father *that sent me*; that is, have neither understood the doctrine of *Christ,* nor the Precepts of *natural Religion* itself. These Prophecies began *in some degree* to be accomplished, by the *Jews* persecuting the Apostles of our Lord: But the *Jews* were so far outdone in this Wickedness, by corrupt *Christians* afterwards; that in like manner as our Saviour testified concerning

* Luke xii. 49. Mat. x. 21, 34.
† John xvi. 2, 3. *and* xv. 21.

the

the worst Age of the *Jews*, that the * *blood of all the Prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world, even from the blood of righteous Abel, down to the blood of Zacharias, should be required of That generation*; so concerning the most corrupt and persecuting part of the *Christian* Church, it is prophesied likewise, † that *in Her* shall be *found the blood of Prophets and of Saints, and of All that are slain upon the Earth.* It is very observable; that as § *Moses*, in the conclusion of the *Law*, foretold such a dispersion of the *Jews* into All Nations, as no *False* Prophet *could* have invented, because "tis such a thing as Never happened to any *other* People, and is therefore a great Evidence of the Truth of *Moses*'s Inspiration: So in the *New Testament* there is clearly foretold such a Corruption of *Christianity*, so *unnatural*, so *incredible*, as could not have entered into the reach of any *humane* Wisdom, to foresee or suspect: That the Professors of *That religion*, whose distinguishing *character*, whose very *Essence*, is universal *Love* and Good-will towards Mankind: should some of them exceed, in *Cruelty*, even the most *barbarous* of the Heathens: That, in order to convert *Others*, they should *themselves* break the *greatest* of God's Commandments; and overturn *all his Laws*, for the Propagation (it seems) of his *Religion*: That Christianity, instead of making men partakers of the *Divine* Nature, should on the contrary become so corrupt, as to divest them of all Remains even of *Humanity itself*: That, instead of causing the *Sun* of Righteousness to arise in mens hearts, it should on the con-

* Luke xi. 50. † Rev. xvii. 6. xviii. 24.
§ Deut. xxviii. 64.

trary extinguish That *Candle* of the Lord, which was *before* in their breasts by the Light of Nature; and make them even *ten times more the children of Wrath, than* if they had never received the Gospel at all, nor ever heard of *the way of Righteousness.*

It will here, no doubt, be alledged, by those of the *Romish* Church, that *Protestants* also, have sometimes *persecuted* men, upon account of Religion: Which perhaps *may* indeed be True, just in the *same* sense, as *good men* may be said to have sometimes committed Robberies, or Murder, or other Crimes; that is, they have, in *so* doing, apostatized from their Profession. But must men then, (they will say,) be left *wholly at liberty* whether they will be religious or not? No certainly: We must exhort, convince, reprove, *be instant with them, in season, out of season*; setting before them, without ceasing, the Promises and the Terrors of the Lord. But *what* if all these things will not prevail with them? Why, then (our Saviour tells us) they must be unto us *as heathen-men and publicans*; that is, we must leave them to the righteous judgment of God. But must not the *Magistrate* then *punish* the Obstinate? Undoubtedly he must; that is, he must punish them for every Action which is *vicious and immoral*; and consequently *hurtful* to the *Publick*, which has a right of Self-defence against all Malefactors: But to abuse the *Sword of Justice*, to an *unjust Compulsion* in matters relating wholly to God and mens own Consciences; this is the *Great Corruption* prophesied of in the whole *New Testament.*

Lastly, It may be alledged by the Church of *Rome*, that there are in *Scripture* approved Instances of men *put to death* upon account of Religion: But the

plain

plain Answer is, that the Cases *There* mentioned, are All of them *exceeding different*, from Those which They are by Popish Writers brought to excuse. In the Law of *Moses*, he that seduced men to worship other Gods, was commanded to be put to death: Because he seduced men to worship Stocks and Stones, the Gods of those abominable Nations whom the Lord had commanded to be extirpated; a Crime equally against all Natural, and all Revealed Religion; which no man's Conscience could innocently or erroneously lead him into; and the Punishment moreover was grounded upon, and justified only by, the *particular express* Command, given by God at That time to the *Jews*, under a severe Law, and under a *political Theocracy* even with respect to their *civil* Government; and was therefore a Case, not to be imitated, but when exactly under *all* the *like Circumstances*, and with the *like* particular *express* Command from God. *Elijah* destroyed men with Fire from Heaven: But 'twas God's own miraculous Interposition, and not any Action of the Prophet, that killed them. He slew also at another time the Prophets of *Baal:* But it was upon an express Command of God, warranted and proved to him by an immediate *Miracle* of Fire from Heaven upon his Burnt-offering. *Phinehas* suddenly killed a man and a woman in their Sin: But the Text tells us, 'twas according to a *special Command* given to *Moses* upon That very occasion: And he that will do the like, must show the like *Inspiration* and the like *Command*. *Ananias* and *Sapphira* fell down dead at the Apostles feet; but 'twas by the miraculous Judgment of *God*, not by any Action of the *Apostles themselves*. He that, from these instances, thinks he may *kill* all men that differ from him in Religion;

will bring in all Enthusiasm and all Wickedness into the world. Can *Christians* show, that *they* have any such Command? have they not the very *contrary* declared to them, in our Saviour's telling his Disciples, when they wished for Fire from Heaven, that they *knew not what Spirit they were of?* There is not therefore, in all the Prophecies through the whole Scripture, any *One* more certain mark of Antichristian Corruption, than the Spirit of *Persecution*: *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her Sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*

SERMON

SERMON II.

Against false Pretences to Religion.

MATT. xxii. 11, 12.

And when the King came in to see the Guests, he saw there a man which had not on a Wedding-garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a Wedding-garment? and he was Speechless.

THESE Words are part of the conclusion of a Parable, in which our Lord represents the *Kingdom of Heaven*, or God's gracious Declarations to Mankind in the *Gospel*, under the Similitude of a King sending forth his Servants at different times, and inviting his Subjects to the *Marriage-Feast* of his Son. Not only by the Light of *Nature* and *Reason*, has God given men the Knowledge of *Himself*, a Sense of the essential and eternal Differences of *Good and Evil*, a necessary and unavoidable Expectation of a *Future Judgment*, and of *Rewards and Punishments* in a *life to come*; but moreover by *Revelation* also, at *sundry times* and in *divers manners*, to the *Patriarchs* and the *Prophets*: and at last by

Christ

Christ himself, and of his *Apostles and Ministers* sent forth even unto the Ends of the World; has he continually *repeated* his *Admonitions*; and without ceasing *invites*, *persuades*, *urges*, *presses* men, with all the *possible* Arguments both of *Reason* and *Authority*, to accept the Gracious and Necessary Terms of Salvation. The *insensibility* of men, in not understanding their true Happiness; their *Negligence*, in refusing to receive instruction in the ways of Virtue; and their *Perversness* in preferring the momentary Pleasures of Sin, before the Happiness of Eternity; is affectionately set forth by our Saviour in *That part* of the Parable, where he describes the Temper and Disposition of the persons invited to the Wedding, ver. 3, *and* 5, that they would not *come*, but *made light of* the invitation, *and went their ways, one to his Farm, another to his Merchandize.* The *Goodness* and *Long-suffering* of *God*, in bearing patiently with Sinners, and giving them space for Repentance, and exhorting them with all earnestness to flee from the Wrath to come; is, in a very lively manner, expressed in the *following part* of the Parable, ver. 9; where the King says to his Servants, after they who had been before invited refused to come; *Go ye into the high-ways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the Wedding*: Or, as St *Luke* expresses it still more pathetically, *Go out into the Streets and Lanes of the City,——go out into the High-ways and Hedges, and* compel *them to come in, that my house may be filled: Compel* them; that is, be *pressing*, be very *urgent* with them, use *all possible* Arguments of Perswasion, give them no *Rest*, 'till they be convinced of their Folly, and prevailed upon to understand their own True Happiness. The *Effect* of these earnest and repeated invitations,

was

was; ver. 10. that *the Servants gathered together all, as many as they found, both Bad and Good; and the Wedding was furnished with Guests:* That is; By the continual Preaching of the Gospel, *Many* are prevailed upon to make *Profession of Religion*, and to seek after the Happiness of the Life to come. But though God *does indeed*, with *all* the *Earnestness* and *Affection* expressed under these Similitudes in the Parable, *invite* men into his Kingdom of Glory; Though he *really* would *have All men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth; not willing that Any should perish, but that All should come to Repentance:* Yet 'tis, above all things, to be here carefully observed, that all these *earnest, repeated, pressing* Invitations, are in no degree any encouragement to any man to expect the *End* without the *Means*, but they are merely Invitations to the *Means* in order to the *End*. God calls no man to *Salvation*, without a Life of *Righteousness:* But he *invites, perswades, exhorts, presses* men, with all the *possible* Arguments both of *Reason and Authority*, to *live virtuously* in order to their *eternal Happiness*. And This is what our Saviour teaches in the words of the Text, at the conclusion of the Parable. *When the King*, (says he) *came in to see the Guests, he saw there a man which had not on a Wedding-garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a Wedding-garment? and he was speechless. Then said the King to his Servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer Darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth. For Many are called, but Few are chosen.*

In the following Discourse, I shall *first* explain the Ground and Meaning of this figurative expression, of *having on a wedding-garment:* And *Then* I shall make some useful and practical *Observations* upon the Text.

I. In the *first* place; The Original and Ground of this figurative expression, of *having on a wedding-garment*, is very easy and natural. The *Mind* of man being *invisible*, and the *Temper* and *Disposition* of a *spiritual Substance* not being discernible to *Sense*; its *Qualifications* consequently can no otherwise be described in words, than under *figurative* expressions drawn from the *Similitude* of *corporeal Objects*. *Pure* and *Impure*, *Clean* and *Unclean*, when applied to the *Soul* in the *Moral* Sense; owe *the clearness* and *expressiveness* of their Signification, to the known meaning of the same words when applied in their *literal* Sense to things *corporeal* and *sensible*. The *Habits* of the *Mind*, are very aptly and strongly represented to our imagination, by Figures taken with justness and propriety from the *Habit* of the *Body*. And the constant, prevailing, habitual *Temper* or *Disposition* of any man's *Spirit*, can no way be set forth more expressively and affectionately; than under the similitude of *Bodily* garments, so investing the person, as to be his *proper and distinguishing Attire*. The invisible, and inaccessible Glory; the inexpressible Greatness and Majesty; the inconceivable Purity and Holiness, of *God Himself*; is in Scripture described, after This manner, by his *putting on glorious* Apparel; by his being Clothed *with Majesty and Honour*, and *decking himself with Light as with a* Garment, *Ps.* xciii. 1; civ. 2. The *Good*, and the *Evil* Qualities of *Men*; the *habitual* ones, which determine and distinguish the person's

son's *Whole* Character; are, through all the Scriptures, perpetually represented under the *same* Figure. A *malicious, uncharitable, persecuting* Spirit; is, in the *Psalmist*'s description, one that Clothes himself with *Cursing*; To whom it is as the Cloke *that he has upon him, and as the* Girdle *that he is always girded withal*, Ps. cix. 17. And when, on the contrary, he is to express the perfectest and most compleat character of spotless Virtue; he does it in the *same* manner; *Let thy Priests be* Clothed *with Righteousness*, Ps. cxxxii. 9. In that beautiful and affectionate Apology which *Job* makes for himself, in That passage where he maintains his past Innocency, and describes his virtuous Behaviour in the days of his Prosperity; *he* likewise makes use of the *same* Metaphor: ch. xxix; ver. 15, 16, 14. *I was Eyes to the Blind, and Feet was I to the Lame: I was a Father to the Poor; and the Cause which I knew not, I searched out: I* put on *Righteousness, and it* Clothed *me; my Judgment was as a* Robe *and a Diadem.* The Prophet *Isaiah*, describing the *Redeemer* of *Israel*, speaks after the *same* Fashion, ch. lix. 17. *He* put on *Righteousness as a Breast-plate, —— and was* clad *with Zeal as a Cloke.* And concerning the People *Redeemed* by him, ch. lxi. 10; *He has* Clothed *me* (says he) *with the* Garments of *Salvation, he hath covered me with the* Robe *of Righteousness, as a* Bridegroom *decketh himself with Ornaments, and as a* Bride *adorneth herself with her Jewels.*

FROM *These* figurative Expressions so frequently occurring in the *Old Testament*, the *same* manner of speaking has descended to the Writers of the *New*. In the Book of the *Revelation*, the Elders before the Throne of God, in St. *John*'s Vision of the Church in

in Heaven, are represented to him as sitting, * *clothed* in *white Raiment*: And the Nations of them that are saved, as standing before the Throne, † *clothed* with *white Robes*. And our Saviour, in the same Vision, is accordingly introduced pronouncing; § *Blessed is he that Watcheth, and keepeth his* Garments: And, ‡ They *that have not defiled their* Garments, *shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy*. Now these *Garments*, the Text expressly tell us, *ch.* xix. 8. are *The Righteousness of the Saints*. The *Whole Passage* is exactly parallel to the *Parable in the Gospel*, of which *my Text* is a Part; and *in particular* it most distinctly explains, what is there meant by the person *not having on a Wedding-Garment*. ver. 7. *The Marriage of the Lamb is come*; —— *and to Her* (to the Church) *was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white*; *for the fine linen is* the Righteousness of the Saints: *And he saith unto me, Write*; *Blessed are they which are called to the* Marriage Supper *of the Lamb*. From This description 'tis evident, that the *man*, whom *the King* in the Parable, when he *came in to see the Guests* whom he had invited to his Son's *Marriage-Feast*, saw *Not having on a Wedding-garment*; This *man* (I say) is *every person*, who, *making profession of the Christian Religion*, yet *practises not the Virtues of a Christian life*; Every person, who, expecting to be *Saved by Christ*, yet regards not the *Conditions on which That Salvation depends*; In a word, every *Profane*, every *Unjust*, every *Unrighteous*, every *Debauched* person, whom the repeated Invitations of Christ in the Gospel, bring not to a timely and an effectual Repentance.

* Rev. iv. 4. † ch. vii. 9. § xvi. 15. ‡ iii. 4.

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HAVING thus explained the *Principal Phrase* in the Text; I shall here, before I proceed, observe by the way, how great a Light may be given, from the explication of this *One* phrase, to *Many other* passages of Scripture, in which the *same figure* of Speech has extended itself into a *variety* of *other* Expressions. Thus when St. *Paul* exhorts, *Eph* iv. 22, 24. Put *ye* off, *concerning the former conversation, the Old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful Lusts: And* put *ye* on *the New man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness*: 'Tis evident how by phrases literally expressing a Change of the *Habit* of the *Body*, and of the external Appearance of the *Person*, he emphatically describes a Change of the *Moral Habit* and Disposition of the *Mind*. Again, *Col.* ii. 11. and ch. iii. 8, 9, 10, 12, 14. Put off *the body of the Sins of the Flesh*: Put off *all these*; *anger, wrath, malice*, and the like; *Seeing that ye have* put off *the Old man with his deeds*; *and have* put on *the New man, which is renewed in Knowledge, after the Image of him that created him*: Put on *therefore, (as the elect of God, holy and beloved,) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering: And above all these*, put on *Charity, which is the Bond of Perfectness*. His Meaning is: *Cloath* yourselves with all Moral and Christian Virtues: Make them the *Habit* of your *Minds*; the constant *character*, by which ye may be known and distinguished from men of different Principles. The *same* figure of Speech, he carries still higher, *Gal.* iii 27. *As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have* put on *Christ*: And *Rom.* xiii. 14. Put *ye* on *the Lord Jesus Christ*; *and make not provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts*

thereof. The phrase is highly significant and expressive: Let your Minds be habitually *invested* with all Moral and *Christian* Virtues, defending yourselves continually against the Approaches of Temptations, and against the Enticements of a vicious and debauched World.

II. *Secondly,* THIS being premised by way of *Explication,* I proceed now to make some *useful and practical Observations* upon the words of the Text. And

1*st,* BY our Lord's representing the King in the Parable, as coming in to view his Guests, and to see whether Any of them had not on a Wedding-garment; is intended to be set forth to us, how *absolutely* and *indispensably* God *expects and requires,* that every man who hopes to be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven, should have his Mind endued (and as it were *cloathed*) with those *habitual virtuous Qualifications;* which can no otherwise be acquired than by righteous Practice. To appear in the *Presence* of a *Prince,* upon any publick and most solemn Occasion, in an improper, indecent, and absurd Dress; is a direct Indignity, and Affront. Now *Sin*; that is, every *moral Impurity,* every *Wickedness* whatsoever, is infinitely more odious in the sight of *God,* than *Any natural* Indecency can be offensive before *Men.* As therefore, even in the *present* time, (to use the words of the Author of the Book of *Wisdom,* cap. 1. 5.) *into a malicious soul Wisdom shall not enter, nor dwell in the Body that is subject unto Sin; For the Holy Spirit of discipline will flee Deceit, and remove from Thoughts that are without Understanding, and will not abide when unrighteousness cometh in:* So, *much more,* in the *future* State, into the *heavenly Jerusalem,*

rusalem, there shall in no case enter Any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh Abomination, or maketh a Lie. Rev. xxi 27.

2dly, By the *Question* the King here puts, to the man who had not on a Wedding-garment; *Friend, how cameſt thou in hither?* upon *what Pretence*, upon *what Ground*, with *what Assurance*, with *what Expectation* cameſt thou in hither, not having on a Wedding-garment? by *This question*, I say, our Lord plainly intimates to us, in way of Admonition or Warning; that there *is* such a thing as a False or ill-grounded Hope; that there *are* deceitful Expectations, which may betray men into Perdition. And 'tis of the higheſt importance in the World, not to be led by them into a groundless Presumption. When men who live in the habitual Practice of Virtue, are, by any particular melancholy and erroneous Notions, led into Great Fears and unreasonable Despondencies; the ill Effect in This case, provided they continue to live virtuously and religiously, is nothing more than the Trouble itself which arises from such Fears. But on the *other* hand, when men who live not a virtuous life, have yet a presumptuous Hope, founded upon *Other* Expedients, and built upon *Any other* Grounds whatsoever; here the Errour is *Fatal*, and directly leads men to Destruction. And therefore our Saviour, in *This* Point, is always very plain and explicit; that no one, even of the meaneſt capacity, can possibly misunderstand him. The *Wedding-garment*, is a *Virtuous Life*: Without this, whosoever pretends to any Hope in Christ, upon what presumption soever it be; to *Him* is the Question put by our Lord; *Friend, how cameſt thou in hither?* Many are the Expedients, which men of corrupt minds have invented, to deceive themselves in This matter.

Some satisfy themselves with the *Zeal* they express for the *Profession* of the True Religion, tho' they dishonour That Profession by Unrighteous Works. Others expect to obtain Salvation by the Strength of their *Faith*; utterly mistaking the *very Meaning* of the word, *Faith*; apprehending it to signify *Credulity*, instead of *Fidelity*; and that they shall be accepted for being *Confident*, instead of *Faithful* Servants. Some depend upon certain Things that can be done for them by *Others*; as if any thing could, in the *religious* Sense, be of Advantage to any man, which does not at all make him the *Better man*. Others rely upon the *Merits of Christ*; deceiving themselves with an expectation that Christ will rescue them from *Punishment*, though they reject all the Motives by which His Gospel proposes to rescue them from *Sin*. These, and all other Expedients of the like nature; all Expedients whatsoever, intended to supply the Want of the One thing necessary, which is a virtuous Life; are what our Saviour here represents to us, by the Person *not having on a Wedding-garment*. 'Tis the same thing, as what he elsewhere compares to a man's *building his House upon the Sand*; instead of founding it *upon a Rock*. 'Tis the same thing, as what he elsewhere warns us of, when he tells, that *Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able*: For, *when they shall say unto him, Lord, Lord, open unto us*; his answer will be, *I know you not whence ye are; Depart from me, all ye workers of Iniquity*.

3*dly*, By the following Observation; that, when, the King asked, *how camest thou in hither, not having a Wedding-garment?* the man *was speechless*: By *This* observation (I say) our Lord teaches us, that the

Judgment

Judgment of God will be *according to Right*; *According to Right*, in the Sense that *We* understand Just and Right; in the Sense, that even the *Wickedest of men* shall not be able to deny, is according to Righteousness and Justice. The man convicted, was *speechless*. He had *nothing to plead* in his own behalf. He was condemned by the Verdict of his *own conscience*, as well as by the righteous Sentence of *God*. This evidently shows, how absurd and unreasonable all those men's notion of God is, who look upon him not as a just and equitable Judge, but as an Arbitrary Lord; condemning or acquitting men according to certain absolute Decrees of *his own*, and not according to *Their* Behaviour. Which Doctrine if it had been true, the person here in the Parable might very justly have pleaded in his own Excuse, that it was not possible for him to have a Wedding-garment, because the King had not been pleased to give him One. And our Saviour, by laying, on the contrary, a particular Stress upon the man's having *no apology* to make for himself; clearly warns us against entertaining any such dishonourable Notions of *God*. The condemnation of Sinners, is wholly from *Themselves*: And the Scripture, by perpetually insisting that it *is* so, urges upon all wicked men, in the most affectionate manner, the destructive Consequences of their vicious Courses, and the indispensable necessity of effectual Repentance and Reformation of manners; And at the same time, it affords the strongest Assurance to Those who sincerely endeavour to live virtuously, that by *That* method *certainly*, and by *That* method *only*, they shall obtain the eternal Favour of God. The reason why even wicked *Heathens* shall be condemned at the last day, is because they *did things* (as our Saviour expresses it)

worthy of Stripes; things *in their own nature* worthy of stripes; things contrary to the dictates of *their own consciences*, contrary to the Light of *universal Reason*, contrary to their *natural Knowledge of God*: *So that they are without Excuse*, Rom. i. 20. *Without Excuse*; That is, in the language of my Text, *Speechless*. And This is what the Scripture elsewhere declares, when it tells us that *the mouth of all Wickedness shall be stopped*, Ps. cvii. 42: And, *Rom.* iii. 19. *That every mouth may be stopped, and all the World become guilty before God.* The Meaning is: When God shall finally judge the Secrets of all Hearts, he shall be *justified* in his Sentence, even Sinners themselves being Judges; and every mouth shall be stopt before him, not by the force of arbitrary and irresistible Power, but by the undeniable evidence of the Justice and Equity and Righteousness of the Judgment.

4*thly*, By the *Benignity* of the *appellation*, wherewith our Saviour here represents the King treating his unworthy Guest; Friend, *how camest thou in hither, not having a Wedding-garment?* Hereby, I say, is affectionately set forth to us the *Reality* of the Concern God has for the Salvation of men. *He*, as the Apostle expresses it, *willeth All men to be saved*; *not willing that Any should perish, but that All might come to Repentance.* And when men continue obstinately impenitent, he condescends to represent himself as *Grieved* with their iniquities. And he *argues* with them, in the most *affectionate* manner, by his Prophets and by his Ministers: *Come now, and let us* reason *together, saith the Lord*; *For, Why will ye die, O ye House of Israel?*

5*thly*, By what follows in the *next words after* the affectionate expression in the Text, Our Saviour adds a *very moving Admonition*, how dreadful at last will be the State of all Those, whom the great Goodness and Long-suffering of God have not been able to bring to Repentance, and to effectual Amendment of Life and Manners. When the man who had not on a Wedding garment, was *Speechless*, and had *no Excuse* for his Total Want of the absolutely necessary and indispensable Qualification of Virtue and Holiness; *Then said the King to his Servants*, ver. 13. *Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; There shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth.*

Lastly: By the concluding words, with which our Lord closes the whole Parable, ver. 14. *For Many are called, but Few are Chosen:* By these words, I say, our Lord clearly and distinctly declares, that the *Chosen* or the *Elect* of God, are not persons originally and unconditionately from the Beginning, *decreed* to be saved; but all such as shall at the End be found *having a Wedding-garment*, that is, Clothed with Righteousness, having led *a Holy and a Virtuous Life.*

SERMON

SERMON III.

Every Man is principally to regard his own proper Duty.

JOHN XXI. 22.

Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is That to Thee? Follow Thou me.

IN the Beginning of This chapter, our Lord appearing to his Disciples after his Resurrection, and making himself known to them by a miraculous draught of Fishes, ver. 6, 7, 11. takes That occasion to give a *particular Admonition* to *Peter*, to be as *diligent* for the *time to come* in propagating the *Doctrine* of *Christ*, as he had in *time past* been *faulty* in denying of *Christ himself*. For which reason he *repeats* his Question no less than *Three times* successively; *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?* till *Peter* was *grieved* at it, ver. 17. and his heart smote him with Regret, at the Justness of the Reproof, and at the Earnestness of the threefold Repetition. Yet at the same time it could not but be matter of *Comfort* to him, and an assured Token of his Repentance being *accepted*; tho' our Lord was pleased, in

in so particular and distinct a manner, to inquire into the Sincerity of his *Love*, and to lay upon him such a repeated Command to *feed his Flock*. The Church of *Rome*, has built upon these words a very extraordinary Consequence: That, because our Saviour commanded St *Peter* to instruct men diligently in the Christian Faith, and St *Peter* was afterward martyred at *Rome* by the Heathen Emperor; therefore the *Bishop of Rome* has a perpetual Right to require what doctrines he pleases, to be received implicitly by the whole Christian Church; without being at all able to prove, that those Doctrines were ever taught either by Christ or by St *Peter*. Which is just such another Consequence, as their inferring the Supremacy of the Bishop or Church of *Rome*, from our Lord's styling St *Peter* a Rock, or a Firm and Solid part in That *Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets*, upon which the *Church of Christ* was to be built. But though neither the One nor the Other were indeed *any* Emblem of *Authority* at all, but of *Duty* only, and of *Success in his Labours*; yet, as being prophetick Declarations of *great Success* in those Labours, they could not but be matter of great *Encouragement* and *Satisfaction* to his mind. And therefore our Lord, (according to his constant Custom of adding Arguments of *Humility* to all his Promises;) as, in the *former* case, after the Promise of *building his Church upon This Rock*, and *giving to Peter the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, (Matt. xvi. 18, 19, 21.) to prevent his Disciples being puft up with a sudden expectation of That Kingdom, he immediately proceeds to a Prediction of *his own Sufferings*, of the Sufferings *our Lord himself* was to submit to; so, in this *Latter* case, after having given This *Command* to

Peter

Peter to *feed his Sheep*; immediately he proceeds in the very next words, to foretell what *Sufferings Peter himself* likewise should undergo. * *Verily, verily, I say unto thee; when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whether thou wouldest*; (alluding to the *Readiness*, wherewith *Peter, when he heard that it was the Lord, girt his Fisher's Coat about him, and cast himself into the Sea*, ver. 7.) *But when thou shalt be old*, saith he, *thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whether thou wouldest not*; that is, should carry him to be crucified. Upon This, † *Peter turning about*, and *seeing the Disciple, whom Jesus loved, following* them; *he saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall This man do?* The Question was a matter of mere *Curiosity*; and therefore our Lord answers it accordingly in the words of my Text, *If I will that he tarry till I come, what is That to Thee? Follow thou me.* *Modern* Expositors have imagined, that our Lord by these words meant to foretel, that St *John* should live till after the *Destruction of Jerusalem*, which they fancy is sometimes stiled *The Coming of Christ*. In the *Apostles* days, the same words were understood by some of the Disciples, as a Prediction that St *John* should not *die at all*, but should continue alive till the *Day of Judgement*; which those, who thus understood the words, in all probability apprehended to be much nearer than it was. *Then went this Saying abroad among the Brethren*, ver. 23. *that That Disciple should not die.* Yet *Jesus* said no such thing, as that That Disciple should continue alive, either till the *Destruction of Jerusalem*, or till his Final *Coming*

* Ver. 18. † Ver. 20.

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to Judgment, or to *any other* determinate time; but only that it concerned not *Peter* to inquire *at all*, what the Divine Providence had thought fit to determine concerning his *Fellow-Disciple*. It was foretold to *Peter* for *particular reasons*, that he himself should *die a Martyr*: Possibly to *support and comfort* him under the uneasy Thoughts, of his having before so shamefully denied his Master: Possibly also for a *contrary* reason, to *humble* him, and keep him from being *puffed up* with the preheminence that seemed in Some manner to be given him above the rest of the Disciples: Or for any *Other reason*, which the Wisdom of God thought proper. But as to That *Other Disciple*, says our Lord; whether *He also* shall die by the hands of *Violence*, or whether he shall die a *Natural Death*, or *how* and *when* he shall die, or whether he shall *die at all*; *What is That to Thee? Follow Thou Me.*

THE words of the Text being thus explained; the *Observations* naturally arising from them, are briefly as follows.

I. *First*; THAT every person, in every station of life whatsoever, wherein the Providence of God thinks fit to place him, has always some *plain* and *certain Duty*, which 'tis his present proper Business to attend to. *Follow Thou Me:* Attend (says our Lord,) to the Doctrine which I am now teaching you; That, when I am ascended into Heaven, you may instruct Others therein with Fidelity and Diligence, which is *Feeding my Sheep*. This was St *Peter*'s Duty, at the time of our Lord's speaking these words to him: And the Admonition is recorded, as the rest of our Saviour's Discourses were, upon account of the *Universality* and *Perpetuity* of its *Application*. 'Twas

not

not in *One single case* only, that our Lord gave this Intimation; *What I say unto you, I say unto All, Watch:* But, in general, the same was intended to be understood in almost *all* his Instructions. *Follow thou Me*; is an Admonition to *Every man*, at *all* Times and in *all* Places, and in *every* Circumstance of Life, to be *intent upon* his proper Duty, whatsoever it be. God has been pleased to distribute among men very different Gifts, to each one his proper Talent; and an Account will be expected from every one, *according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not.* In the right Use of those Capacities and Faculties, those Abilities and Opportunities, whatsoever they be, wherewith God has intrusted every particular person; in *This* consists That person's proper and peculiar Duty. They who are indued with *Riches, Power*, and *Authority* in the World; are, by the great Weight and Influence of their Example, to promote *Justice, Equity*, and *Charity* among Mankind. They who are *Poor* and *Afflicted*, have a particular Call to the Virtues of *Patience* and *Contentment*; which, in their proper place, do no less truly and effectually promote the Glory of God, than the more conspicuous Virtues of those in higher Stations. Those who have *Learning* and *Knowledge*, are to spread the Light of *Truth* with Fidelity and Diligence, and to apply the Arguments of *uncorrupt Religion* and the Motives of *Virtuous Practice*, with all the Clearness and Strength they are able. And Those of the *Lowest* and *Meanest* Capacities, even the most *Ignorant* of all, have still a plain way of Duty before them; to adhere stedfastly to those *Few Truths* they know, those most *Important Truths* which no man can innocently be ignorant of: *Living soberly, righteously, and*

godly

godly in this present world, because *God has appointed a Day in the which he will judge the World in Righteousness*: And taking heed not to be imposed upon with things they *cannot understand*; by which the World has been led into the inextricable Labyrinth of endless and unintelligible Superstitions. *Before* the Will of God was made clear by *Revelation*, the *Light of Nature* was mens *Guide*, and the *Obligations of right Reason* were the *Rule of their Duty* and their *Guard against Superstition*. *Since* That time, whosoever has had the Doctrine of the Gospel *reasonably* and *credibly* proposed to him; to *Him* does our Lord say, as to St *Peter* in the Text, *Follow Thou Me*. He is *in general* to follow Christ, in the *universal Practice* of *all* Christian Virtues; and *in particular* he is to attend to *that proper and peculiar* Duty, whatsoever it be, which is the right Use of those Talents wherewith Providence has intrusted him. *Every man*, saith the Apostle, *hath his proper Gift of God*; *one after This manner, and another after That*, 1 Cor. vii. 7. *To one is given by the Spirit, the word of Wisdom*; ——— *to another, the word of Knowledge*; ——— *to another, Faith*; ——— *to another Prophecy*; ——— *to another, divers kinds of Tongues*, 1 Cor. 12. 8. *Having then gifts differing, according to the grace that is given to us*; *whether Prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of Faith*; (That is, let us teach the Will of God *faithfully*, according to the degree of the *Ability*, the *Talent*, the *Trust* committed to us: That is the Meaning of the word, *Faith*, in This place:) *Or* (whether it be) *Ministry, let us wait on our ministring*; *or he that teacheth, on Teaching*; *Or he that exhorteth, on Exhortation*; *He that giveth, let him do it with Simplicity*; *He that ruleth, with diligence*; *He that shew-*

eth mercy, with chearfulness, Rom. xii. 6. Or in the words of St *Peter*, 1 Pet. iv. 10. *As every man has received the Gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good Stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the Oracles of God: If any man minister, let him do it as of the Ability which God giveth.*

THIS is the *First* Observation I would draw from the words of the Text: That every person, in every station of life whatsoever, wherein the Providence of God thinks fit to place him, has always some *plain* and *certain* Duty, which 'tis his present proper Business to attend to: *Follow thou Me.*

II. THE *Second* thing observable in the words of the Text, is; that when *Peter* put a Question to our Lord, upon a matter which did not at all relate to his own *proper* and *particular* Duty; the Answer our Lord gives him, *(What is that to Thee? Follow thou Me*;) is Such an Answer, as he constantly gave at all *other* Times to *any* of his Disciples upon *any* the like occasion. It was his *General* Method, through the whole History of the Gospel; whatever *Discourse* was raised, or whatever *Question* was put to him, which had no relation to the particular *Duty* of the persons that proposed it; it was his constant and general Method, instead of satisfying their *Curiosity* by a direct Answer, to turn the Discourse into an occasion either of instructing them in the *Knowledge* of their *Duty*, or of exhorting them to the *Practice* of it. Thus, when his Disciples asked him, *Matt.* xxiv. 3. *When shall these things be? and what shall be the Sign of thy Coming, and of the End of the World?* His Answer is, * *Watch YE*, and *be ye*

* Ver. 42, 44.

ready

ready always; *for in ſuch an hour as you think not, the Son of Man cometh.* When one aſked him, *Luke* xiii. 23. *Lord, are there Few that be ſaved?* inſtead of ſatisfying the perſon's Curioſity, he exhorts both Him that aſked the Queſtion, and as many Others as were preſent, to take care that *They themſelves* be found in the number, *whatever* That *Number* be: *Strive YE to enter in at the ſtrait gate.* And again: When his Diſciples aſked him, *Matt.* xviii. 1. *Who is the Greateſt in the Kingdom of Heaven?* inſtead of naming, according to *Their* expectation, ſome among themſelves, who had converſed with him moſt intimately here upon Earth, (which Expectation ſhowed forth itſelf particularly in the Requeſt of the Mother of *Zebedee*'s children, that *One of her Sons* might *ſit on his Right hand,* and *the Other on his Left in his Kingdom*;) inſtead of This, I ſay, he tells them *Which* was the *Only Way,* whereby they could attain to the Kingdom of Heaven *at all. Setting a a little Child in the midſt of them,* he ſaid; *Verily I ſay unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye ſhall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Thus, *in general,* whatever Queſtion or matter of Diſcourſe had no relation to the proper and neceſſary *Duty* of the *perſons themſelves* who moved the Diſcourſe; our Lord always turned it from a matter of mere Curioſity, into ſome real *Inſtruction* or uſeful *Exhortation.*

III. A *Third* thing to be obſerved in the words of the Text, is; that our Lord does here diſcourage *in particular,* a *Curioſity of Inquiry* into *Other mens Affairs.* 'Twas upon *Peter*'s inquiring concerning *Another Diſciple* which followed him, *and what ſhall This man do?* that our Lord made to him the

Reply in the Text, *What is That to Thee? Follow Thou Me.* The Inquiry was *innocent*; And there is no reason to suppose that our Lord was *angry* with *Peter* for making it. But he was willing to take This opportunity, (according to his Custom upon all Other occasions,) of inculcating upon *Peter his own* Duty, and of discouraging all *needless Curiosity* concerning the Affairs of *Others*. What was *innocent* in St *Peter* in the *present* case, and may in *numberless* Instances be *innocent* in *Any* man; is yet a matter which *may* grow into a *Vice*, and, by becoming a *Habit*, may lead to things very *detrimental* to a right Temper and Disposition of Mind. The *Evil* of *Vain Curiosity* does not appear at first sight, either to *Others*, or perhaps to the *Person himself*; but when indulged habitually, it frequently terminates in an *idle*, *worthless*, and *unprofitable* Temper: Such as is described by St *Paul*, 1 Tim. v. 13. *They learn to be idle, wandring about from house to house; and not only idle, but tatlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not:* Or, as St *Peter* expresses it, 1 Pet. iv. 15. *Busy-bodies in other mens matters.* This Temper, though *in itself* it may seem only *trifling* and *worthless*, yet in its consequences it leads very naturally to *Other* and *Greater Vices*; to *Envy*, *Strife*, *Contentiousness*, *Pride*, *Censoriousness*, *Discontent*, and numberless other troublesome and mischievous Effects. Persons of This disposition, are extremely apt to be continually *pulling Motes out of their Brother's Eye*, while a *Beam* remains unperceived *in their Own*; That is, to be perpetually *magnifying* the *Faults* of Others, and altogether *insensible* of *their Own*. They are very apt, either to *undervalue* and *despise* the *Talents* and *Abilities* wherewith God

God has been pleaſed to endue Others; which is what St *Paul* repreſents under the ſimilitude of * *The Eye ſaying unto the Hand, I have no need of Thee; and again the Head to the Feet, I have no need of You:* Or elſe, in the contrary Extreme, they will *envy* and *repine at* the *Advantages* that Others enjoy; Which is what our Saviour reproves in his parable of the Labourers, † *Is Thine Eye evil, becauſe I am Good?* The ſame Temper it is, that moves perſons of different *Sects*, to be inquiſitive about the poſſibility of mens Salvation in *Other Communities*, rather than attentive to diſcover and amend any Errors in *their Own*. Whether a *Heathen*, to whom the Light of the Goſpel was never made known, can be ſaved by obeying the Law of *Reaſon*; and whether Salvation is attainable in ſuch *Chriſtian Societies*, as are greatly corrupt in very important Doctrines; are Queſtions, to which our Saviour would have replied, *What is That to Thee? Follow Thou Me.* But one thing is very certain, that no man can be ſaved, who does not ſincerely endeavour to find out the *Truth* for *Himſelf*; who *wilfully* propagates *known* Errors; and has no ſollicitude to reform his *Own* Vices, and (as far as lies in *His* Power) the Vices of his *Companions and Friends.*

IV. *Fourthly*, As our Lord in the Text expreſsly diſcourages all needleſs Curioſity of inquiry into other mens *Affairs*; ſo, by Analogy, the ſame Caution may in its Application reaſonably be extended likewiſe to a Curioſity about *Doctrines* not of importance to Religion. Whatever *Notions* do in their Conſequences affect the *Worſhip* of the *True God*, or have any direct influence either in promoting or hindring the

* 1 Cor. xii. 21. † Mat. xx. 15.

Practice of *True Virtue and Goodness* among *Men*; These indeed can never be too carefully *inquired* into, or too thoroughly examined. But Speculations which are of no such Consequence, the Fewer of them Religion is concerned with, the better. They are generally matter of Contention only, and uncharitable Animosity; and have brought great Scandal and Reproach upon Religion. A Fondness of determining things not all certain, or not clearly understood; and a Shame of departing from what could not reasonably be maintained; has been the Ground and the Support, the Cause both of the Rise and of the Continuance, of almost all the Sects, with which the *World* has been *divided*, and the *Religion* of Christ *dishonoured*. Could men prevail with themselves to be more zealous about things confessedly of Universal Importance, than about the distinguishing Notions of Particular Sects; which, in the common Methods of the World, are so much the *more eagerly* contended for, as they are *less reasonable* or *more uncertain*: Could men, I say, prevail with themselves to be *less sollicitous* about things uncertain, and *more diligent* in the Practice of undisputed Virtues; the State of Religion in the World, would soon have a very different Aspect; and the Effect of its influence upon mens Lives and Manners, would be unspeakably great, with respect both to the Happiness of the *Present Life*, and of That also which is *to come*.

V. *Fifthly and Lastly*; THE Last Observation I shall raise from the words of the Text, is; that we are not to draw *Inferences* from *particular Expressions* in Scripture, different from the evident *Intention* of the *Whole Discourse* in which Such Expressions are found. From our Lord's saying to St *Peter*, *If I*

will

will that That other Disciple *tarry till I come, what is That to Thee?* immediately *This Saying went abroad among the Brethren, that That Disciple should not die. Yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but,* whether he shall die or no, *what is That to Thee?* In like manner; he who from the Parable of the *Ten Virgins,* whereof *Five* are represented as being *Wise,* and *Five Foolish*; should infer that the *Number* of those who shall be *Saved,* will be exactly *Equal* to that of Those who *Perish*; when the Parable was not intended to describe the *Number,* but the *Qualifications* of Them which shall be saved; would be found to make a very inconsequent Deduction. And the like would be the Argument, of Him who, from the Parable of the *Talents*; (wherein the Servants, who with *Ten,* and with *Five,* and with *Two* Talents committed to them are represented as being proportionally *rewarded* for their proportional Improvement of these respective Sums; while *He only* was *punished,* who hid in a Napkin his *One Single* Talent;) should infer, that *Those only* will perish, who have but *Small Abilities*; though the Scripture on the contrary expresly declares, that *to whom much is given, of Him will be the more required.* All Arguings, I say, of This Kind, from single *incidental* Expressions of Scripture; are mere groundless Imaginations: Nor can Any thing ever be of real Use in the Religion of a Christian, but our being careful in the *Profession* of *Those Doctrines,* and in the *Practice* of *Those Duties,* which are evidently the *intentional* Aim and View of our Lord's *whole* Discourses.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

The Folly of losing one's Soul to gain the whole World.

MATT. xvi. 26.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul.

OUR Saviour in his Parable of the Sower, represents to us the incredible *Carelessness* of men, in the most important matters of Religion, by a very remarkable Comparison: As *some seeds*, says he, *fall by the way-side, and the fowls come and devour them up*; so *when any one heareth the Word of the Kingdom and understandeth it not*, i. e. attends not to it, nor fixes his Mind upon it, *then cometh the wicked one, and* catcheth away *That which was sown in his Heart.* The Meaning is; not that the Devil has Power *literally*, to steal mens Knowledge out of their minds, and rob them of their religious Notions; but that men are frequently so *careless*, even in things which they themselves *well know* to be of the utmost importance to them; that the *degree* of their negligence cannot be Truly represented by any lower figure, than by supposing them to

to have even lost *out of their Minds* Those Notions, to which they give so little attention. St *Paul* has a Phrase no less expressive, *Gal.* iii. 1; *O foolish Galatians, who has* bewitched *you; that you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been* evidently *set forth,* yet *should not obey the Truth?* That men should have the Truth *evidently* set before them, and yet *not obey* it; is so great an Absurdity, that he represents it elegantly by That *unusual* Phrase, *Who has* bewitched *you?*

THAT, in *temporal* affairs, a man should accept *any thing* in exchange for his *Life,* is a Folly never heard of. *Skin for Skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his Life,* Job ii. 4. In *spiritual* Concerns, the Argument is as much stronger, as *Eternity* is of more importance than *Time,* and *Immortality* of greater Consequence than this *transitory Life.* Our Saviour, with great Propriety of expression, compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a *Treasure hid in a Field, which when a man hath found, for joy thereof he goeth, and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that Field*; Matt. xiii. 44; and to a *goodly pearl of great price,* (ver. 46.) *which when a man had found, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.* To part with this inestimable Treasure, for a *Trifle*; and accept any thing, that the pleasures of Sin can afford a man, in exchange for his own Life, in exchange for his future and *eternal* life; is the Folly our Saviour intended to expose in the words of the Text, *What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul?*

THAT there is *no profit* in such an Exchange, is a Proposition that wants no *Proof.* For there is no man so stupid, as not to be sensible of this Truth;

no

no man ſo ignorant, as not to think it needleſs for Another to go about to convince him of it. Yet ſo it is, that even This very *Reaſon*, the indiſputable *Certainty* of ſo great a Truth, and its being without controverſy and of neceſſity acknowledged by all, comes in the event of things to be *itſelf* an occaſion, that makes men ſtand in need of *more* earneſt *exhortations*, to perſwade them not to forget or neglect it. For, as the *ſtrongeſt* Objects, which make perpetually an equal and *continued* Impreſſion upon our Senſes, are apt, by reaſon of their *conſtant* Preſence, to affect us *little* more, than if they made *no* Impreſſion upon the Senſe at all: So the *abſolute* and *evident Certainty* of this great Truth, leaving *no room* for Inquiry or Debate, makes careleſs men almoſt as much lay aſide the Thoughts of it, as if the Certainty were on the *other* ſide of the Queſtion; and as if they really thought it a *ſufficient Profit*, to gain, not the *Whole* World, but even ſome of the moſt *inconſiderable* of its enjoyments, at the Expence of their own Souls. 'Tis very evident, *no man* can poſſibly ſo think: 'Tis very evident that *every man*, who pretends to believe any thing of religion at all, muſt of neceſſity acknowledge the inexpreſſible diſproportion between things temporary and eternal. Nevertheleſs, they are not *influenced* by this great Truth, according to the importance of it; but ſhake off the Thoughts of it, as if it were of no moment to meditate upon what they think they are *already ſufficiently convinced of*; and look upon it as a troubleſome importunity, to be always reminding them of *That*, which they *well knew* and were ſatisfied of *before*. They *know* it indeed very well; But *That Knowledge* of theirs, without frequent and ſerious Meditation, is *like* unto Ignorance; becauſe it has *no Effect*, and makes *no*

Impreſſion.

Impression. 'Tis like the *speculative* knowledge of a Truth that concerns them not; or like the *habitual* Understanding of a mathematical Demonstration, never recollected. Most reasonably therefore does our Saviour put to us the Question, and expects that we should frequently put it to *ourselves*; *What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul?*

THE *occasion* of the words, was his discoursing to his Disciples concerning the expectation of *Persecution.* He had told them, ver. 21. how many things *he himself* was to suffer at the hands of the *Jews*; and he goes on to tell them, ver. 24. that *They also* must expect to suffer in like manner: *If any man will come after me,* he must *deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*; *For whosoever will lose his Life for my sake, shall find it*; and *whosoever will save his Life, shall lose it:* That is, whosoever parts with his virtue and good conscience, to *save* his *temporal* life; shall *lose* that which is *eternal*; and by escaping the *first* Death for a *time,* shall incur the penalty of the *second* Death *for ever.* And This explains the meaning of those difficult words which follow in the 28th verse, *Verily, I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of Death, 'till they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom.* By these words, *there be some standing here,* 'tis probable he had Regard particularly to *Judas*: And it seems to have been his intention, to represent *natural* or *temporal* Death so inconsiderable, as if *They* only, who fell under the *second* Death, could with any propriety be said to *Taste* the Bitterness of *Death* at all. They shall not *taste of Death, 'till they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom.* And

This

This *increases* the Strength, of the Argument he intended to inforce in the words of the Text; *What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul?*

THE *Argument* our Saviour here uses, is one of *That* kind, which by taking into the Supposition much *more* than *is* or *can be true*; concludes so much the *more undeniably*, and with the *greater Strength*, in all *cases* which really *are* true. He puts the *Supposition*, that a man by losing his Soul, *could* gain the *whole World:* And if he *did* so, his Gain would be *nothing*. The *Conclusion* he intended we should draw from hence, is this; How much more *foolish* then are sinful men; who *lose* their Souls, and yet, in the exchange, gain *not the whole World* neither; nor indeed, any considerable *part* of it?

FOR, *what* is it, that *Sinners* generally enjoy in the World, more than the *righteous?* Not a *longer Life:* Very often a *shorter*, being cut off by their own Folly in the midst of their days. Not a *healthier Body:* Most usually a more *infirm* one, made so by their own debauched and intemperate Living. Not a more *satisfied Mind:* On the contrary, a Mind *very* Uneasy for the most part, and full of *perplexity*. In a word, they enjoy in reality, more than the Righteous, nothing but the *bare perverseness*, nothing but the *mere irregularity* of those very pleasures, which really and in Truth are *much* more pleasures when accompanied with innocency.

BUT to be *more distinct and particular*, in considering, 1*st*, the *Supposition*, which our Saviour puts; and 2*dly*, the *Conclusion*, which he intends we should draw from it.

I. *First*; Our Saviour puts the *Supposition*, that a man, by losing his Soul, could, in exchange, gain to himself the *whole World*: And, upon That Supposition, proposes the Question; *What would it profit him?* The Answer, *that it would profit him nothing*, is what every man's natural Sense immediately suggests to him. The *Doctrine* therefore *included* in our Saviour's *question*, and *asserted* in the *Answer*, is This: that, could a man, by being *wicked*, gain to himself absolutely *all* the *good* things of this present life; and, on the contrary, by being conscientiously *religious*, were *certainly* to suffer *all* the *Evil*, that this present World can inflict; (which, generally speaking, is by no means the case: But, supposing it *were*;) yet still the *Wicked* man's Choice would be infinitely *foolish*, and the *Virtuous* man's truly *Wise*.

For, *what* is it, that a *virtuous* man, even upon *This* Supposition, can possibly suffer? *All* the *Evils* of this present life; All the *external* Evils, which are the *only* ones that *can* befal a righteous man; are *poverty* of *condition*, *Contempt* in the *opinion of wicked men*, and *Pain* or Uneasiness of *Body*: Things very grievous indeed to Flesh and Blood, and which may and ought by all *lawful* means to be carefully avoided. But they are all of them *natural* Calamities; incident to the *wicked*, as well as to the *righteous*: Sometimes, they can by *no means* be avoided; neither by any *lawful*, nor by any *unlawful* Practices. But when they *can* be avoided, by deserting our Duty; 'tis by no means worth while to do it, at the expence of our *Souls*. For *these Evils*, at the *worst* that can be supposed, are all *Temporal*; and, when at the greatest extremity,

nor

not *Temporal* only, but even *very short* also. * *My Friends*, saith our Saviour, *Be not afraid of them that kill the Body, and after That have no more that they can do: But I will forewarn you, whom you shall fear; Fear Him, who, after he has killed, has power to cast into Hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him.* The Argument used by the Lepers in the Siege of *Samaria*, 2 *Kings* vii. 4. is very applicable to This case: *If we enter into the City*, said they, *the Famine is in the city, and we shall die; and if we sit here we die also*; and if *we fall unto the Host of the Syrians, and — they kill us, we shall but die.* A man in the worst of Circumstances, and under the severest Persecutions, by adhering to the Cause of Truth and Virtue, can lose but his temporal Life: And so he must *however*, perhaps by a Disease more painful, than the Death his Persecutors would inflict; and his Mind, at the same time, not supported, with the Hopes of a glorious Immortality.

On the other hand; *what* is it, that a *wicked* man, even upon the *high* Supposition our Saviour puts, can possibly attain? All the *good* things of this *whole* World, are *Riches*, *Honour*, and *Pleasure*: Now were it possible that a man, in exchange for his Soul could gain to himself the whole Compass of these sensual Enjoyments; (Which yet is indeed very far from any wicked man's case; But suppose he *could*;) *Suppose* he could, in *Riches*, exceed the Glory of *Solomon*; and, in *Power*, extend his Dominion from one Sea to the other, and force all Nations to do him Service; and, in his *personal* capacity, enjoy a continued series of the greatest and most uninterrupted *pleasures*; and All this, even to

* Luke xii. 4.

the Age of *Methusalem*; yet still these things would be but *Temporal*; and, when past, though after the *longest* duration, they would all seem but as a *shadow that departeth, and as a Dream when one awaketh.* * *Riches* would *not profit* the man, *in the day of wrath*; and the Time must at length come, when it would be said unto him, *Thou Fool, this night shall thy Soul be required of thee*; and his having been *clothed in purple and fine linen, and having fared sumptuously every day*, would be *no comfort* to him, when he finally *lift up his eyes in Torment*. Besides, that, even in this *present* life itself, such a Possessor of the *whole* World, could enjoy *really* but a very *small* part, of what, in *fancy and imagination only*, would be his own *property*. He who knew and enjoyed more of it, than any other mortal man; concluded more than once, that even in the highest Pitch of temporal Prosperity, *All is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*.

THUS have I put the Case, according to our Lord's *Supposition* in the Text, not as things usually *are*, but to the *greatest* advantage on the side of Wickedness; that a man, in exchange for his Soul, could gain by unrighteousness the *whole* World; or, by adhering to Virtue would on the contrary *suffer*, all he can *here suffer*. By considering the *Recompence*, which will attend the Choice of *either* part; we may be enabled to judge, of the *Truth* of our Lord's assertion; that the *wicked* man's Choice, even upon this extraordinary *supposition* of gaining the *whole* World, would be very *foolish*; and the *virtuous* man's, very *wise*. For, to enter into the *particulars*; Suppose a religious person, is by his ad-

* Prov. xi. 4.

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hering to the ways of Virtue, reduced to extreme *Poverty*; (which however is very seldom the Case, except in times of Persecution only;) yet there is a *worse Poverty*, which at the same time he *avoids* by *that very* Choice; a State of *Exclusion* from the Love and Favour of God, which Loss, even in this *present* Time, is an anticipation of outer darkness: *Rev.* iii. 17. *Thou knowest not, that thou art wretched and miserable and* poor *and blind and naked.* This *Poverty*, the *virtuous* man, even under the *severest* Persecutions, is sure to escape; and under the *greatest* pressure of *temporal* Wants, secures to himself the *truer* and more *certain Riches* of *Virtue and Contentment*; * the *Merchandise whereof is better than the Merchandise of Silver, and the gain thereof than fine Gold.* He secures to himself That *Pearl of great price*, of which our Saviour affirms, that *He* was a wise man, who *sold all that he had, and bought it.* He is numbered with Those, concerning whom † St *James* declares, that though they are *poor* in *this World*, yet *they are rich in Faith*; *and Heirs of the Kingdom, which God has promised to them that love him.* He, with *Moses*, § esteems *the reproach of Christ*, greater Riches *than the treasures in Egypt*; and may justly apply to himself our *Saviour*'s words to the Church of *Smyrna*, Rev. ii. 9. *I know thy works, and tribulation and poverty, but thou art* rich. He has *laid up for himself treasure in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, nor Thieves break through and steal*, nor any Anxiety of Mind disturbs the enjoyment of it.

AGAIN: If a truly religious man, does, by being such, fall under the *greatest* Contempt, in the

* Prov. iii. 14. † Jam. ii. 5. § Heb. xi. 26.

Opinion of wicked men; yet there is a *worse Dishonour*, which he at the same time avoids, even the *Shame and Dishonour* of *Sin*, to his *own Conscience here*, and in the presence of the *whole World hereafter*; when they that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall *awake, some to everlasting Life, and some to* Shame and Everlasting Contempt, *Dan.* xii. 2. And, under the *highest* unjust *Reproaches* of Men, he is secure in the Possession of true *Worth*; of *That Worth*, which *God* himself the Judge of All, will vouchsafe to honour in the presence of the Holy Angels; when Christ shall present those who suffer for his sake, as *Kings and Priests unto God even his Father*; and they *shall reign with Him for ever*; crowned with *Glory* and *Immortality*; being made *Sons of God*, and *equal unto the Angels*; among whom, *they that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the Firmament*, and *they that turn many to righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever.*

Lastly, If a virtuous and good man suffers in his *Person*, even unto *Death* itself; (which *very seldom* is the Case;) yet there *is* a Calamity *greater* than Death, which he avoids by choosing the present temporal Suffering. He avoids the Sting of a guilty Conscience, the insupportable Terror of a wounded Spirit, and the future inexpressible Pains of Hell. And he gains at present That Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost; which can be exceeded by nothing but That which follows after it, even That Happiness of Heaven, which *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of man to conceive*; a Happiness prepared for them that love him, by *Him in whose presence there is*

Fulness

Fulness of Joy, and at whose right hand there are Pleasures for evermore.

On the other hand; Could a *wicked* man, by being wicked, gain to himself (as our Saviour here puts the Supposition; could he *certainly* gain to himself) the *whole* World; yet *where* would be the Wisdom and Advantage of *His* Choice, who thus * *laid up Treasure for Himself, and was not rich towards God?* For, by choosing *Temporal* Wealth, Honour, and Pleasure, upon the Terms of unrighteousness; he forfeits That unspeakable Happiness which is *Eternal:* and by avoiding the *short and transitory* Evils, of *present* Poverty, Contempt, and Pain; he chooses the same *future* evils, to continue *for ever*; where the worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched, in which the foolish and impenitent Sinner † *shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his Power.* *This* Consideration, sets forth in few words, the extreme Folly of the Man that loses his own Soul, even upon that *High Supposition* our Saviour puts, of his gaining in exchange for it the *whole World.* Which was the *First* thing to be considered. But

II. *Secondly*; The *Principal* Design of our Saviour in This Argument, was, by taking into the Supposition much *more* than *is* or *can be true*; to conclude so much the *more undeniably*, and with the *greater Strength*, in all *cases* which really *are* true. He puts the *Supposition*, that a man by losing his Soul could gain the *whole World:* And if he did so, his Gain would be *nothing*; For, *What* would it *profit* him? The *Conclusion* he intended we should

* Luke xii. 21. † 2 Thess. i. 9.

draw

draw from hence, is; how much more *foolish* are sinful men; who *lose* their Souls, and yet, in the Exchange, gain *not the whole World* neither; nor indeed, any considerable *part* of it? *Generally speaking*, they lose, both *their own Souls*, and the best part of the enjoyments even of this *present World* too. *They that have done wickedly*, (as 'tis elegantly expressed in the *second* Book of *Esdras*, ch. vii. 18.) *have suffered the strait things, and yet shall* not *see the wide*; that is, they *suffer*, by their Folly, in the *present* Life; and yet obtain not *That which is to come*. But *good* men, both secure to themselves *That which is to come*; and at the same time, (excepting *always* the case of *Persecution*, which hath its *peculiar Promises*,) they enjoy the *present* good things, at least *equally*, with the wicked. To be particular: The *Religious* man, *believes in God*; *worships, loves, fears, and trusts in him*: What detriment is This to his *temporal* affairs? Nay, on the contrary, it gives him Assurance and Peace and Satisfaction of Mind in the whole course of his Life *here*, at the same time that it secures to him eternal Rest *hereafter*.

He is *just and righteous, equitable and charitable* in his dealings with all Mankind: What loses he by That, *at present?* Nay, generally it gains him *Trust, and Confidence*; the *Love, Honour, and Esteem*, at least of Wise and Good Men. In the *present* time, the righteous is more honourable than his Neighbour; and in the *End* he attains a glorious Immortality.

He is not *covetous* to heap up inordinate Riches; but with Diligence and Frugality, with Piety and Charity, gets and uses them: What disadvantage is This to him in the *World?* Nay, on the contrary, by

by This, ſaith *Solomon*, * ſhall *his barns be filled with plenty*, and *the Soul of the liberal ſhall be made fat:* The Bread that he ſcattereth upon the Waters, ſhall he find again after many days; and he lays up for himſelf, *beſides*, in *Heaven*, an incorruptible treaſure.

Laſtly, He moderates his *Appetites and Paſſions*, by the Rules of Reaſon and true Religion: And what damage is That to him in the *preſent* Life? Nay, generally ſpeaking, he is Maſter of *all lawful and valuable enjoyments*; with better Health of *Body*, and more Satisfaction of *Mind:* Prov. iii. 7, 8, 17. *Fear the Lord, and depart from Evil; It ſhall be Health to thy Navel, and Marrow to thy Bones. The Ways* of Wiſdom, even in the *preſent* time, *are Pleaſantneſs, and all her Paths are Peace*; and in the *End* they lead, to *Fulneſs of Joy*, and *Pleaſures for evermore.*

On the other hand; The *wicked and debauched* perſon, either *diſbelieves* all religion, or neglects and *deſpiſes* it; living in contempt of God, and in habitual profanation of the Laws of his Maker: What gains he by That *Here?* Fears and Terrours, Horrour and Deſpair, Uncertainty and anxious *Doubtfulneſs* at leaſt, about what is to come hereafter. *Iſ.* lvii. 20. *The wicked are like the troubled Sea, when it cannot reſt; whoſe Waters caſt up mire and dirt; there is no Peace, ſaith my God to the wicked:* And for *This* it is, that he exchanges his Soul *hereafter.*

He is *unjuſt and uncharitable, falſe and unfaithful, cruel and oppreſſive:* What *Benefit* is This, even to his *temporal* affairs? Generally, it brings upon him Hatred and Diſtruſt, Shame and Diſhonour,

* Prov. iii. 10; xi. 25.

among

among *Men:* And for *This*, he parts with his Soul *for ever*.

He is *Covetous and insatiable* in *getting*, or *profligate and profuse* in *wasting:* What *Fruit* has he of these things *at present?* Anxiety, and no enjoyment of what he has heaped up, *saving the beholding it with his Eyes*; or else Poverty and Want, after he has wasted it in rioting and Debauchery: And for *This* it is, that he exchanges his immortal Treasure.

Lastly, He is under the Dominion of ungoverned *Appetites*, disorderly *Passions*, and unlawful *Pleasures:* What Happiness has he in this licentiousness *at present?* Slavery and Vexation of *Mind*, always; and generally, in his *Body*, acute Diseases, and a speedy Death: *Her house is the way to Hell, going down to the Chambers of Death*, Prov. vii. 27: And for *This*, he parts with his Hope of future Immortality.

This *is the portion of a wicked man from God, and* This *the Heritage appointed unto him*, Job xx. 29. From all which, the Folly of choosing the ways of Wickedness is so extremely apparent; that, as if (comparatively speaking) there were *no other* Folly in the World, the Scripture with great reason uses the words, *Folly and Wickedness*, promiscuously for one and the same thing: And 'tis not a *Tautology*, but a most *elegant* Description of the extreme Folly of Sinners, which *Solomon* gives us, *Prov.* xiv. 8, 24. *The Folly of Fools is Deceit, and the Foolishness of Fools is Folly.*

The *cause* of so great a Stupidity among rational Creatures *can* be nothing, but either *Unbelief* of the Government of God, and of a Judgment to come; which is contrary to all Principles of Reason: or else such *extreme Carelessness*, as St *Peter* describes, when

when he compares some men to *natural brute Beasts made to be taken and destroyed*, 2 Pet. ii. 12: or such *want of consideration*, as our Saviour, in the Parable of the Sower, describes by a very elegant Figure, when he represents the Devil *stealing away* out of mens minds the Notions that had been taught them: Or else, lastly, it must be such an obstinate *Madness*, in resolving *knowingly* to prefer things temporal before eternal; as *Esau* was a figure of, when *for one morsel of Meat he sold his Birthright*; or such as St *Paul* describes in the 7th to the *Romans*, when he introduces a man *doing* what he *allows not*; and *what he hates*, (that is, what his *Reason* hates,) he in his *Folly* does. Whenever this case is represented to a wicked man in the person of *Another*, or set forth under the Circumstances of a *worldly* affair; he can harldly believe it *possible*, that any rational creature should act so absurdly. 'Tis with him, as it was with *David*, when the Prophet *Nathan* surprized him, saying, *Thou art the Man*; or as it was with *Hazael*, when he said to *Elisha*, *Is thy Servant a Dog, that he should do this thing?*

SINCE therefore, in *Reason and Speculation*, This whole matter is so clear and indisputable; let us, in order more effectually to influence our *Practice*,

1*st*, SERIOUSLY and frequently *meditate*, upon the *True Weight* and *Importance* of Things; that we suffer not ourselves to be deceived by *perpetual Inadvertency*, and ruined by *habitual Negligence*, after the Example of a careless and inconsiderate World.

2*dly*, LET us accustom ourselves to consider, *what* Notions *Other* men Now have, and we are sure

sure *we ourselves* shall *have*, of these things; when the Deceits of this World shall be removed from before our Eyes, at the Hour of *Death*, and in the day of *Judgment*. For This is not an *imaginary*, but a *real* Event; towards which *Wise men* always look forward, that it may never surprize them unprepared.

3*dly*, LET us be Thankful to God, that, generally speaking, he puts upon us no *harder* Terms of Salvation. What the Servant said to *Naaman* the *Syrian*, may well be applied to *Us*: *If the Lord had bid thee do some Great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much more when he only saith unto thee, wash and be clean!* When we consider what the *Martyrs* suffered of old for *Religion*, and what *Austerities* many in the World now undergo thro' mere *Superstition*; shall *we* think it much to mortify an unlawful Lust, and deny ourselves a sinful Pleasure, for the honour of God and the Salvation of our Souls?

4*thly* and *lastly*; LET us consider that the prize is worthy; Let us fortify ourselves with resolutions to undergo the *hardest* conditions Providence shall think fit to lay upon us; and this will enable us *chearfully* to perform the *easier* ones.

SERMON

SERMON V.

Of the Neceſſity of Holineſs.

HEB. xii. 14.

Follow peace with all men, and Holineſs, without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord.

THESE words contain a moſt powerful motive, to *Holineſs* of life; drawn from the conſideration of the Nature of our *Religion* and the Condition of our *Happineſs*. The abſolute and indiſpenſable Condition of *Happineſs*, is the practice of true Religion; and the true nature and eſſence of *Religion*, is Holineſs of Life: *Without Holineſs, no man ſhall ſee the Lord.*

IN the words we may obſerve; 1*ſt*, A Repreſentation made, of the *true nature* of Religion, under the name or character of *Holineſs*. 2*dly*, An Exhortation given us, to put That Holineſs in practice; (*Follow peace, and* Holineſs.) 3*dly*, An Aſſurance or Connexion of Happineſs, as the proper conſequence of ſuch Religious Practice. And 4*thly*, A Repreſentation of the nature of That Happineſs, under the notion or character of *Seeing God*.

FROM which Observations there naturally arise the following Propositions: 1*st*, That the true and ultimate Intent of all the Laws and Institutions of Religion, is to make men holy. 2*dly*, That it *is possible* for us to be really holy, according to the true Intent and Meaning of those Laws. 3*dly*, That God has made it the indispensable Condition of our Happiness, that we become *thus* holy. And 4*thly*, That the nature of that Happiness is such, that it is not possible to be enjoyed, but by those who actually *are* thus holy.

I. *First*; THE true and ultimate Intent of all the Laws and Institutions of Religion, is to make men holy. Man is a rational creature, made capable of knowing and of obeying God, and of conforming his life to the Pattern and Imitation of the divine Perfections. This Obedience to the Commands, and Imitation of the Nature and Life of God, is the true Essence of Religion. And as it is the indispensable duty of all Created Beings, to *endeavour* after this Purity, so 'tis the highest excellency and perfection of their nature, 'tis their greatest possible improvement, to *attain* it. The greater degrees of such Holiness any Being is endued with, so much the higher rank does it obtain in the order of Creatures. The highest *Angels*, so much as they obey the Will of God *more entirely*, and imitate the divine Life *more perfectly* than *men* do; so far are they exalted *above* men, and have a nearer approach to the immediate Presence and Enjoyment of God. And so much as *one Man* in this life arrives at a greater degree of Holiness than another, so much shall he obtain a more excellent degree of Happiness in that life which is to come.

To

To assist men in their Endeavours after this *Holiness*, God has, *at sundry times and in divers manners*, appointed several forms or institutions of Religion; which we ought carefully *so* to distinguish from Religion itself, as we would do the *means* of obtaining any thing, from the *end* to be obtained. For *Religion* itself, is that Purity, or that virtuous temper and disposition of mind, which exerts itself in a constant endeavour of being like unto God, and of obeying his Commands: But the *institution* of Religion, is only that outward establishment or *form* of worship, which is the Means of acquiring such a Holy Disposition. And these outward forms, which in their own nature are changeable, have never been valued in the sight of God, any otherwise than as they promoted the End they were designed for; *viz.* That Holiness, which is eternally and unchangeably the same. This was the original religion of Paradise, and before that, even of Heaven itself. This was the End of God's revealing himself to the Patriarch's, and separating them from the idolatrous World. This was the End, of his giving the law to the *Jews*; that they might be a *Holy people* unto the Lord their God. To This all their Sacrifices, all their Purifications led them; and were of no value in *comparison with* This, but only *in order* to it. *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord*, saith the Prophet, *and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil?* Nay, but *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk*

humbly with thy God? Micah vi. 6. And whensoever they failed of having this desired effect, of making the persons lives more holy; God declares that he even abhorred all their religious Exercises; *He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; and he that burneth Incense, as if he blessed an Idol; yea they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their Abominations*: Isai. lxvi. 3. And, concerning the *Christian* Institution it is still more expresly evident, that the design of *the grace of God which bringeth salvation*, i. e. of the *Gospel's appearing unto all men*, was to *Teach us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* And nothing can be a greater contradiction, than the practice of such persons, as hope to answer the design of Christianity by any other method whatsoever, instead of *purifying themselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* The Apostles in their Epistles give us several representations of Religion under figurative and metaphorical expressions, but all agreeing constantly in this; that the Substance and the End of all Religion, is Virtue or Holiness of life. Sometimes 'tis called the *New Man*, i. e. a being changed from Wickedness to Righteousness; *Ephes.* iv. 22. Sometimes it is called *a New Creature, Gal.* vi. 15. *In Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a New Creature*, i. e. a life of real Holiness and renewed Obedience to God's commands; For so the Apostle explains his own words expresly, 1 *Cor.* vii. 19. *Circumcision is nothing,*

and

and uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping the commandments of God. In some places, a religious life is called *Sanctification.* In other passages 'tis represented under the titles of *Repentance* and *Conversion, Regeneration* or the *New Birth, Purification* and *Holiness.* All which, and many other the like Terms made use of in Scripture, do manifestly tend to this; that the Life and Substance, the End and Design of Christian Religion, is, that men turn from a life of Sin unto a life of Righteousness, in order to have a *Conscience void of offence both towards God and towards Men.*

II. I proceed in the *second* place to show, that, as the main Design of Religion is to oblige men to Holiness, so it *is possible* for us, to be really holy, according to the true intent and meaning of the laws of our Religion. And indeed, since God is not a hard master, expecting to *reap where he has not sown,* and *to gather where he has not strawed,* it cannot be conceived that he should impose any commands on us, which it were not possible for us to obey. But because, when we think of the infinite Purity of God, who cannot behold Iniquity; and consider the corrupted and degenerate state of humane nature; this may be apt to make us more apprehensive than is reasonable, of the difficulty of our Duty; it is therefore here to be observed particularly; 1*st*, That God does not ordinarily require more of us, than what a sincere mind, notwithstanding the corruption of our nature, is well able to perform; 2*dly*, That whensoever he requires more than this, he never fails to afford us proportionably great assistance, to enable us to perform what he so requires; and *lastly*, That if at any time we are surprized into the com-

mission of Sin, he accepts real Repentance and a renewed Obedience instead of an uninterrupted course of Holiness.

1*st*, God does not ordinarily require more of us, than what a sincere mind, notwithstanding the corruption of our nature, is well able to perform. The condition of the Gospel-covenant is not perfect unsinning Obedience, but a sincere endeavour to obey all the Commands of God to the utmost of our power. Upon which account, St *John* justly affirms, that the *commands* of God *are not grievous*; and our Saviour himself calls his *yoke easy*, and his *burden light*. What the Servant said to *Naaman* the *Syrian* is very applicable upon this Argument: *My Father, if the Lord had bid thee do some* great *thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much more, when he only saith unto thee, Wash and be clean!* The Commandments, in their general and most proper sense, are so far from being impossible to be observed, that on the contrary, a man cannot easily transgress them, without a hardened conscience and deliberate choice. But because, in *some* particular cases and circumstances, things *more difficult* are enjoined us, such as our Saviour compares to pulling out a right eye, or cutting off a right hand; therefore I add,

2*dly*, That whensoever God requires more of us than we are naturally able to perform, he never fails to afford us proportionably great assistance, to enable us to perform what he so requires. Our Saviour assures us, that if a tender mother cannot deny the son of her love any reasonable request, much less *will God deny his Holy Spirit to them that ask him*; and St *Paul* declares, that all good Christians *have* the Spirit of God dwelling in them, except by their

wilful

wilful Sins they quench, and grieve, and drive it from them. So that however weak and imperfect our *Nature* be, yet with this *aſſiſtance* we are ſure that the Power which is for us is greater than that which is againſt us; and a ſufficient incouragement it is, to *work out our own ſalvation with fear and trembling, to conſider that it is God that giveth us both to will and to do of his good pleaſure*, Phil. ii. 13. There are ſome particular Temptations, which humane nature ſeems more peculiarly unable to reſiſt; and when any of theſe aſſault us, God has promiſed that he will with the Temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it; and that he will afford us a ſupport proportionable to the Difficulty we are obliged to encounter. The primitive Chriſtians, are a wonderful inſtance of this Truth: They were tried with the moſt cruel tortures, that either the wit of man could invent, or the malice of the devil could prompt men to inflict: *They were ſtoned, they were ſawn aſunder, were tempted, were ſlain with the ſword; they wandered about in ſheep-ſkins and goat-ſkins, being deſtitute, afflicted, tormented:* Yet ſo powerfully were they ſupported by the influence of God's Holy Spirit, that they ſuffered all the Barbarities of their inhumane Perſecutors with *leſs* concern, than we can even endure to hear or to read of them. And in the caſe of the *contrary* Temptation, of great and uninterrupted *worldly Proſperity*; (which is almoſt as dangerous, and apt (by ſoftening and debaſing mens minds) to ſeduce them and withdraw them inſenſibly from their Duty, as Perſecution is by violence to drive them from it;) concerning This, when our Saviour had affirmed, *that it is eaſier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than*

for

for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God: He immediately adds, *With* Men *this is impoſſible, but with* God *all things are poſſible*; i. e. By the aſſiſtance of the grace of God, which he is always ready to afford to thoſe that *believe* and deſire to *obey* his Goſpel, this temptation of great Proſperity *may* be overcome; and not only ſo, but even further, That Power and Riches which are to moſt men an occaſion of falling, may become the matter of a more excellent Virtue, and an advantage of doing much more good in the world. To *Us, humanely* ſpeaking, in a ſtate of great *Proſperity*, the Dangers are ſo great, and the Errors ſo numerous, that *that which is crooked cannot be made ſtraight, and That which is wanting cannot be numbered:* But to the grace of God revealed in the Goſpel, all things are poſſible. But

3*dly*, If through the frailty and infirmity of our Nature, we be at any time, notwithſtanding our ſincere endeavours to the contrary, ſurprized into the commiſſion of Sin; God accepts real Repentance and a renewed Obedience, inſtead of an uninterrupted courſe of Holineſs. *If any man ſin*, ſaith St *John*, *we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our Sins*, 1 John ii. 1. God takes no delight in the death of a Sinner; but uſes great forbearance and long-ſuffering towards us, that we may be led to Repentance; And if we *do* ſo ſincerely repent, as *indeed* to amend our lives and forſake our ſins, God has ſworn by himſelf that we *ſhall* live; for, *have I any pleaſure at all that the wicked ſhould die, ſaith the Lord God, and not that he ſhould rather turn from his ways and live?* Ezek. xviii. 22. With thoſe Limitations, it is abundantly evident, that as the true and only

deſign

deſign of the laws of the Goſpel, is to make us holy and undefiled, ſo it *is* poſſible for us to be really holy according to the true Intent and Meaning of thoſe laws. Wherefore, as the excellent Nature and Deſign of our Religion, ſufficiently recommends it to our judgment; ſo the poſſibility of obeying it, is a moſt powerful encouragement to us, to ſet in earneſt about the practice of it. But then we muſt always conſider, that as God requires nothing *more* of us, than a ſincere obedience according to the gracious terms of the Goſpel-covenant; ſo he will not accept of any thing leſs: As it *is poſſible* for us to be holy and undefiled, according to the true intent of the laws of our Religion; ſo God has made it the *indiſpenſable* condition of our Happineſs, that we actually and in reality become ſuch holy Perſons: Which was the

III. *Third* Head I propoſed to ſpeak to. Our Saviour by his Death and Sufferings *has* purchaſed this grace for us, that real Repentance and ſincere renewed Obedience ſhall be accepted inſtead of Innocence; but *without* this Repentance and renewed Obedience, we ſhall never be accepted upon any terms. God *has* eſtabliſhed a new and gracious Covenant with us, upon the mediation of Chriſt; but the abſolute and indiſpenſable condition of our enjoying the benefit of this new Covenant, is our ſincerely renewing our Obedience. *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord,* (ſays our Saviour,) *ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that* doeth *the will of my Father which is in Heaven.* In like manner St *Paul,* 1 Cor. vi. 9. *Know ye not that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God?* Be not deceived; *neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards,*

nor

nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. Again, *Ephes.* v. 6. *Let* no man deceive you with vain words, *for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience* even in the *Heathen-world.* And *Gal.* v. 19. *The works of the flesh are manifest; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things, shall* not *inherit the kingdom of God.* So *Rev.* xxi. 27. and xxii. 15. Notwithstanding all which most express and repeated declarations of Holy Scripture, there are yet two sorts of persons especially, who are very apt to deceive themselves in this matter. The one is of those, who think their *Faith* sufficient to save them, without Works of Holiness. To whom we may answer in the words of St *James,* ch. ii. ver. 14. *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works; can faith save him?* And this he illustrates by a most elegant similitude, ver. 15. *If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be you warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit; Even so faith,* (says he,) *if it hath not works, is dead being alone;* Dead, *i. e.* fruitless, without life or profit. But what saith the same Apostle? *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and to keep a man's self unspotted from the world,* Jam. i. 27. The other sort of persons, who are very apt to deceive themselves in this matter, are those who living wickedly, yet design to repent before they die. And to these we may very well apply the Similitude of the same

Apostle.

Apostle. If our saying to a poor man, Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled, (without giving him any thing to supply those Necessities,) can satisfy his Hunger and relieve his Wants; then also in like manner may a dying man's *wishing* that he *had* so lived, *be indeed* living a holy life. But the folly of these pretences will be yet more manifest, if we consider in the

IV. *Fourth* and *last* place, that the very *nature* itself of the Happiness promised to holy and virtuous men is such, that it is not possible to be enjoyed, but by those that actually *are* holy. And this the Apostle St *Paul* hints to us (in the Text, *Heb.* xii. 14.) by giving us a representation of that Happiness, under the notion of *Seeing God.* And *Rev.* xxii. 4. *And they shall* see *his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads.* Now to *see God, is* not, seeing him as with bodily eyes: or understanding his metaphysical nature; This, as no creature now *can,* so 'tis probable they never *will* be able to do. But to *see God,* is to be admitted into his glorious presence, and to enjoy that Satisfaction which must necessarily arise, from the *contemplation* of his perfections, and from the *sense* of his favour: For *in his presence is fulness of joy, at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore.* And *thus to see God,* necessarily implies a perfect love of him, and, as far as is possible, a *likeness or resemblance* to him. For so St *John* argues, in his first epistle, ch. iii. ver. 2. *It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be* like *him; for we shall* see him as he is. This therefore is the Happiness promised to holy and good men: They shall be admitted into the immediate presence of God, and into

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the ſociety of Angels and of the Spirits of juſt men made perfect; *Ye are come*, ſaith St *Paul*, Heb. xii. 22. *unto mount Sion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, and to Jeſus the Mediator of the new Covenant. They who ſhall be thought worthy to obtain that life, and the reſurrection from the dead*, ſhall for ever behold the face of God in glory, and by that bleſſed Viſion their hearts ſhall be filled with a moſt ardent *Love* of God, and their Souls ſhall be transformed into his image and *likeneſs*. And if this be the caſe; then nothing is more evident, than that this Happineſs is of ſuch a nature, as is not poſſible to be enjoyed, but by ſuch as actually *are* holy and undefiled. For what agreement can there be, between a ſenſual, wicked, or malicious ſoul, and the pure ſociety of the Spirits of juſt men made perfect? We ſee even in *this* life, how ungrateful the Society of good men is, to ſuch as are obſtinately and incorrigibly wicked; and as it is in *this*, ſo, much more, will it be in the *other* world. Such perſons, as have been wholly given up to the ſinful pleaſures of a debauched world, can never be fit company for thoſe ſpiritual and refined minds, whoſe Deſires and Enjoyments are as far exalted above every thing that is groſs and ſenſual, as Heaven is above Earth: And *malicious* tempers, whoſe delight upon *Earth* was in nothing, but Hatred, Envy, and Revenge, can never converſe in *Heaven* with thoſe bleſſed Spirits, who feed and live upon no other pleaſures, but thoſe of Goodneſs, Holineſs, and Love. Again, what can be more impoſſible,

impoſſible, than for wicked and debauched minds to be made happy by the Viſion and Fruition of God, who is Purity and Holineſs itſelf? Salvation, muſt be begun *here:* Grace and Glory, are but different degrees of one and the ſame ſtate: And 'tis a very remarkable expreſſion of Scripture, according to the true rendring of the Original, that *God adds to the Church daily*, not *ſuch as* ſhould be, but *ſuch as* are *ſaved.* So that unleſs God ſhould work a miracle for profane perſons, and when he removes them into another world, ſhould transform them alſo into new Creatures; 'tis no more poſſible for *Them* to enjoy the Happineſs of Heaven, than for *Body* to enjoy the pleaſures of *Spirit*, or for *Darkneſs* to have communion and agreement with *Light.* I will not preſume to affirm, (though ſome have done it, not without appearance of reaſon,) that if God ſhould tranſplant ſuch perſons into Heaven, he *could* not make them happy there; but ſo long as they are thus exceedingly indiſpoſed for it, nothing is more certain than that he *never will:* For *without Holineſs, no man ſhall ſee the Lord.*

SERMON VI.

Holineſs of Life the moſt acceptable Sacrifice to God.

ROMANS xxii. 1.

I beſeech you, therefore, Brethren, by the Mercies of God, that ye preſent your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God; which is your reaſonable Service.

THE Apoſtle St *Paul* in the former part of this Epiſtle, having ſhown that the *Gentiles* by departing from the Law of *Nature*, and the *Jews* by tranſgreſſing the Law of *Moſes*; had Both of them become obnoxious to the Wrath of God; from thence infers the obligation incumbent upon *Both*, to have recourſe to the Grace and Mercy of the *Goſpel*, by believing in *Chriſt*, and returning to God in *That way* of Faith and Repentance, which the Apoſtles were ſent forth to preach both unto *Jews* and *Gentiles*. Againſt This great Doctrine of the Goſpel, the *Gentiles* had nothing material to object, any further than as the Antient Cuſtoms of their Forefathers, and the habitual Corruption of

their own Manners, made them unwilling to reform. But the *Jews*, to whoſe Anceſtors God had made ſingular Promiſes of *eternal* Bleſſings, and to whom (as a peculiar people or nation) he had been pleaſed to give a *particular Law* by immediate Revelation; Theſe were extremely averſe to believe, that he would ever put an end to That inſtitution, and receive the *Gentiles* to his Mercy in common with the *Jews*; nay, and *reject* the nation of the *Jews*, for not receiving the Goſpel in common with the *Gentiles*. To remove this Great Prejudice therefore; the Apoſtle from the *third chapter* of this Epiſtle to the end of the *eleventh*, argues with ſingular ſtrength and earneſtneſs, that the Great Father of the *Jewiſh* Nation, even *Abraham* himſelf, received the Promiſes of God, not upon account of the *Law*, which was not then given; nor upon account of the Seal of *Circumciſion*, which had not as yet been commanded him; but upon account of the *like Faith*, and the *like obedience*, as was afterwards required by the *Goſpel*. That as God, the Maker and Lord of all, had an undoubted Right to *chuſe* the *Poſterity of Abraham* to be his peculiar people and the Standard of true religion, without doing thereby Any Wrong or Injury to the reſt of Mankind; ſo he had evidently the very ſame Right, whenever he pleaſed, to *remove* again That partition-wall, and admit the *Gentiles* to be Partakers of the ſame external Advantages with the *Jews*; nay, and to *caſt off* the *Jews* for refuſing That Method of Salvation, which he had *now* commanded to be preached equally to *All*. *Laſtly*, the Apoſtle argues, that in *all* theſe various diſpenſations of Providence, the *Deſign* of God was merciful towards *All men*; leading them, by the Motives both of

of Severity and Goodneſs, to Repentance and Reformation of Life. Caſting off the *Jews* for their impenitency, and offering mercy to the *Gentiles*; intending finally, through the Fulneſs of the *Gentiles*, to bring in alſo the *Jews* again. For *ſo* he ſums up his *whole* Argument, ch. xi. 30. *As* Ye *in times paſt have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through* Their *Unbelief*; *even ſo have* Theſe *alſo now not believed, that thro'* your *mercy* they *alſo may obtain mercy: For God hath concluded them* all *in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon All: O the depth of the riches both of the Knowledge and wiſdom of God! how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!*

HAVING thus concluded his *Argument*, he proceeds in the words of the Text, according to his uſual Method in all his epiſtles, to draw an *inference of exhortation* from what he had before ſaid, to perſwade men to the Practice of Virtue and Righteouſneſs. *I beſeech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye preſent your Bodies a Living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God; which is your reaſonable Service.*

I beſeech you Therefore: The word, *Therefore*, ſhows the *connexion* of the *preſent* exhortation, with his *foregoing* Argument. God in *all* the diſpenſations of his Providence, both in the *merciful* and in the *ſevere* parts of it, has ſet forth to us the Neceſſity of Repentance and Amendment; therefore, (ſays he) *I beſeech you, brethren*, let This Conſideration have its due effect upon you, that you neither deſpiſe his Mercy, nor provoke his Severity.

AND becauſe the *finiſhing point* in which his Argument terminates, is the obſervation, that *all*

the Great Diſpenſations of Providence are with unſearchable Wiſdom deſigned finally to iſſue in Events of *Mercy*; (God *hath concluded All in Unbelief, that he might have* Mercy *upon All:*) for This reaſon 'tis with great eloquence of affection, that the Apoſtle lays the Streſs of his exhortation upon *That* particular Motive: *I beſeech you therefore, brethren, by the* Mercies *of God.* The like expreſſion he again uſes, 2 Cor. x. 1. *I beſeech you by the Meekneſs and Gentieneſs of Chriſt.* His Senſe, in Both places is: Let the Mercy and Goodneſs of God, manifeſted and declared to you by the Goſpel of Chriſt, prevail with you to live as *becometh* the Goſpel, to live *worthy* of the Grace and Benefits ye have received.

THAT *ye preſent your Bodies,* (that is, *yourſelves,*) *a* living Sacrifice; a Sacrifice as much more valuable in the Sight of God, than the Sacrifices of Beaſts offered up upon the Altar, as a *Man* is more valuable than an *irrational Animal*; as a Living *Man* is more valuable, than a *ſlain Beaſt*; as the Moral *Perfections* of a Man, are more excellent than a *Sacrifice free from mere* natural *Blemiſhes of the Body*; as, laſtly, the *thing ſignified itſelf,* is always preferable to a *Mere Repreſentation.* That ye preſent yourſelves unto God, ſuch a *Living Sacrifice* as This; Holy, not with a mere *legal, external, nominal* Holineſs, conſiſting purely in things being *ſet apart* (by *conſecration* or *ſolemn denomination* only) to ſuch or ſuch particular Uſes; but Holy, by a *real, moral, intrinſick* Sanctity, of which the *Legal* Holineſs was but a Type or a Shadow; Holy, by *real Purity* and *Goodneſs of Manners*; in the Senſe wherein *He* is *Holy,* who is of *purer eyes than to behold iniquity*; Holy, in this *true and ſpiritual* Senſe; And conſequently,

ſequently, as the Text goes on, acceptable *unto God*; acceptable, not merely by Virtue of *inſtitution and Command*; but acceptable in the *nature of the* thing itſelf; acceptable, as being in *Agreeableneſs and Conformity* to the *Nature of* God; acceptable, as being a fulfilling of the *eſſential and unchangeable Law of everlaſting* Righteouſneſs. For *thus* even the Light of *Reaſon* taught the Wiſer *Heathens*, that by *No Offering* could God be ſo acceptably worſhipped, as by the Oblation of a *Heart* free from *Unrighteouſneſs and Iniquity*. *Thus* alſo the *Prophets* among the *Jews*, in order to draw That people, as they were able, to a rational notion of religion; *Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and Sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than Sacrifice; and to hearken, than the Fat of Rams.* And *Thus* likewiſe our *Saviour himſelf*, who came to reſtore the Purity of uncorrupted religion; *Thou art not far*, ſays he, *from the Kingdom of God*; expreſſing his High Approbation of a certain Scribe's profeſſion, that for a man *to Love God with all his Heart, and his Neighbour as himſelf, is more than all whole Burnt-offerings and Sacrifices.*

In the *laſt* place therefore, the Apoſtle adds, as a *concluſion* of his *whole* exhortation in the Text; that This ſpiritual Sacrifice, this Moral Purity and Holineſs of Life, is our Reaſonable Service: Reaſonable, in point of *Gratitude*; upon account of what he had before alledged concerning the *Mercies of God*, or the merciful and gracious Diſpenſations of his Providence towards men: Reaſonable, in the *nature* of *Things*; as being *in itſelf* of eternal and unchangeable Obligation: Reaſonable, with regard to the nature of *God*; who is a Being of eſſential Purity

and

and Holineſs: and Reaſonable, with Regard to the nature of *Men*; as being the *Proper* Duty and Service, of *Rational* Creatures.

THE words of the Text being thus explained; the principal *Particulars* therein, which deſerve to be more largely and diſtinctly conſidered, are; *1ſt*, Whence it comes to paſs, that the Apoſtle here expreſſes our *whole* Chriſtian Duty, by the *particular* phraſe of preſenting our Bodies Holy, acceptable unto God: and *2dly*, What is the full intent, of his ſtiling this our Service *a Living* Sacrifice.

I. *Firſt*; WHENCE comes it to paſs, that the Apoſtle here expreſſes our *whole* Chriſtian Duty, by the *particular* phraſe of preſenting our Bodies Holy, acceptable unto God? He does not ſay, preſent *yourſelves*, but your *Bodies*, a living Sacrifice, Holy, acceptable unto God. Now the reaſon of This, ſeems to be, that having in the *former* part of this epiſtle deſcribed the great *depravity* and *corruption* of manners among the *unbelieving Gentiles*, *principally* in the inſtance of thoſe Works of the Fleſh, to which God had judicially given them up as a conſequence of their groſs idolatries, ſo contradictory to the plain Light of Nature and Reaſon; in the *latter* part of the epiſtle he accordingly *ſuits* his exhortations to the *converted* Gentiles, to *purify themſelves from all filthineſs both of* Fleſh *and Spirit, perfecting Holineſs in the Fear of God*; and that, in the *firſt* place, they ſhould be ſure to cleanſe themſelves from thoſe *Works of the Fleſh*, which were the Great Cauſe of God's Anger even againſt the Heathen World; and by forſaking of which, they might in a particular manner be ſaid to preſent their *Bodies* a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. The Sins of *This* kind, are

are what ought not indeed to be once *named* among Christians: *Eph.* v. 3. *Fornication and all uncleanness, let it not be once* named *amongst you, as becometh Saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather, giving of Thanks: For This ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ, and of God: Let no man deceive you with vain words; For because of these things, cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience*; or, as it in the margin, upon the children of *Unbelief*; that is, even upon the *Heathen world* itself. Where, by the way, 'tis very observable, that the *Apostle*, speaking of the *Heathen-nations*, does not say, as Some in *later* Ages have done, that their being *ignorant in Unbelief* is the cause of all their Actions being sinful and displeasing to God; but, on the contrary, that the Sinfulness and Wickedness of their *Actions*, in opposition to That degree of Light they enjoy; is the true and only cause, of their being hateful to God: *For because of* These *things* (says he) *cometh the Wrath of God upon the Children of Unbelief*. Now if among those who *knew not God*, that is, who had no *express Revelation*, nor *any other* Declaration of the Will of God, than what the mere Light of *Nature and Reason* afforded; if among *These* (I say,) all Sins of This kind were so justly punishable; how much more among *Christians*; whom (as the Apostle expresses it) God hath called *unto Holiness*, that is, has by a *particular* Revelation, by *peculiar* Promises, and by *extraordinary* Assistances, appointed to be unto himself a *chosen generation, a royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, a peculiar people!* For, *This is the Will of God,*

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1 Th. iv. 3; *this is the will of God, even your Sanctification; That every one of you may know how to poſſeſs* himſelf *in Sanctification and Honour: Not in the luſt of concupiſcence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:* —— *Becauſe that the Lord is the avenger of all ſuch, as we have alſo forewarned you and teſtified:* —— *He therefore that deſpiſeth, deſpiſeth not Man, but God, who hath alſo given unto us his Holy Spirit. Given unto us his* Holy Spirit: That is, has given us all the extraordinary *Motives*, and all the peculiar *Aſſiſtances* and *Advantages* of the *Goſpel*, in order to our *Sanctification.* Inſomuch that the ſame Apoſtle, by a very elegant and expreſſive ſimilitude, ſtiles the *Bodies* of Chriſtians, *Temples of God*, and *Temples of the Holy Ghoſt*; and from thence draws a ſtrong and affecting argument, to perſwade them to the Virtues of Sobriety and Holineſs. *Know ye not* (ſays he) *that ye are the Temples of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the Temple of God, him ſhall God deſtroy; For the Temple of God is Holy, which Temple ye are.* And again: *Know ye not that your Body is the Temple of the Holy Ghoſt, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a Price; Therefore glorify God (glorify the Lord who bought you* with the precious blood of his dear Son; glorify him) *in your Body, and in your Spirit, which are God's:* (1 Cor. vi. 19.) In *very corrupt* and *degenerate* Ages of the World, there will always be *Some profligate* perſons, who will pretend indeed they cannot *diſcern* the Great *Wickedneſs and Immorality* of ſome of the Practices againſt which theſe exhortations are directed; as (they muſt needs confeſs,) they evidently enough do; in

in the Instances of Many *Other* sorts of Crimes. But how unwilling soever they are to *perceive, wherein* lies the heinous nature of these Vices, when they are the *guilty persons themselves*; yet they are always very sensible of it, when they *themselves suffer* by the Guilt of *Others*; when any Dishonour of this kind is done to their *own Families*, or even to *remote Relations*. *Then* they see plainly, how destructive all these Debaucheries are, to Human Society, and to the publick Welfare; how irreconcileable they are with All Serious Thoughts, and worthy Actions; how they cover men with Shame, and Baseness of Spirit; how they separate the nearest and most close Relations, lay a ground for inextricable confusions and implacable Dissensions in Families, and very frequently occasion Murders, Seditions and publick Devastations: So that hardly from *Any Other* Cause, have sprung such *Tragical* and calamitous Events, as from the Sins and Debaucheries of *This* sort. *One* part of these ill consequences, is excellently described by *Solomon*: Prov. vi. 32. vii. 22. *He that doth* these things, *destroyeth his Own Soul: A wound and dishonour shall be get, and his Reproach shall not be wiped away. He goeth after a strange woman, as an Ox goeth to the Slaughter, or as a Fool to the correction of the Stocks; 'Till a dart strike through his Liver; as a Bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his Life.* —For *her house is the way to Hell, going down to the Chambers of Death.* This is an Argument drawn from the *natural Tendency* of things, and from the Wise *Observations* which *Solomon* had made upon the Course of the world, and upon the Ways and Practices of Men. But the Argument is *doubly* enforced, by the considerations of the *Gospel*; which,

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to the general Motives of *Nature and Reaſon*, has added this *further* peculiar Obligation, great and more powerful than all; that having a Promiſe given us of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled in the Heavens, we are now, as *Strangers and Pilgrims* in this preſent World, required to reſtrain all inordinate Deſires which *war againſt the Soul*; that is, which would tempt men to exchange their *eternal Happineſs* for the *tranſient and momentary pleaſures of Sin.* Heb. xii. 16. *Leſt there be Any Fornicator, or profane perſon as Eſau, who for one morſel of meat ſold his Birthright; For ye know that afterwards, when he would have inherited the Bleſſing, he was rejected; for he found no place of Repentance, tho' he ſought it carefully with Tears.* The Meaning is; not that True Repentance, which produces real Amendment and effectual Reformation of Manners, will ever be rejected; but that, at the time of Judgment, when the Bleſſing comes to be inherited, and they who have ſold their Hopes of it for the Pleaſures of Sin, ſhall ſay, *Lord, Lord, open unto us*; then will our Lord reply, *I know you not whence ye are, Depart from Me all ye Workers of Iniquity.* I conclude *This* head therefore with That excellent exhortation of St *Paul*, Rom. xiii. 12, *Let us caſt off the Works of Darkneſs, and put upon us the Armour of Light: Let us walk honeſtly as in the day*, (that is, as becometh thoſe who enjoy the Light of the Goſpel;) *not in rioting and drunkenneſs, not in chambering and wantonneſs, not in ſtrife and envying; But put ye on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, (that is, live as becomes the Diſciples of Chriſt,) *and make no proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfil the Luſts thereof.*

II. *Secondly*;

II. *Secondly*; THAT which remains, is to consider in the *next* place, what is the true and full Intent of that *Other* Phrase the Apostle uses in the text; when this Duty of *presenting our Bodies Holy, acceptable unto God*, is here stiled by him a *Living* Sacrifice. For the clear understanding the ground of which expression, 'tis to be observed, that the proper Punishment of Sin being *Death*, and yet God resolving to have Mercy on such as should repent and amend; he thought proper, in the Wisdom of his Government, to declare and establish, to confirm and ratify this Covenant of Mercy, by the *Sacrifice* of the *Death of Christ* once offered for ever. As a *Type* of which, and as an *Emblem* of the true Demerit of Sin, and as the Sinners *Acknowledgment* of his Guilt, and Profession of Repentance; God was pleased, in the early Ages of the World, to accept the *sacrificing* of Beasts. In which matter, when impartially considered, it cannot be said there was any thing unworthy of God. For since they are all, creatures which God has *freely* created, and *freely* given them *Life*; since they are moreover created *necessarily subject* to *Death*; and fitted in the very *Course* and original *Design* of their nature, to be slain for Food, to *Men* and to *each other*; it cannot be said there is any thing *incongruous*, in their having been appointed to be used as *Sacrifices* in the Service of *God*. Nevertheless, since these Sacrifices were never in any *other* respect acceptable unto God, but merely as *Figures* and *Shadows*; as *Types* of *Christ*, and as Acknowledgments or Professions of the Sinner's *Repentance*; 'tis evident, that from the *Beginning*, the real and true Sacrifice most pleasing to God, always was the *person's* dedicating *himself* to the *Service* of God, by such

a *Death unto Sin*, as the *ſlaying* of the Sacrifice repreſented; and by ſuch *Amendment of Life* for the future, as was typically ſignified by the Sacrifice being *without Blemiſh*. From whence, even in the *Old Teſtament*, the Prophet, ſpeaking comparatively, *Behold*, ſays he, *to Obey is better than Sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of Rams*. The Pſalmiſt likewiſe, *Thou deſireſt not ſacrifice*, ſays he, *elſe would I give it thee, but thou delighteſt not in burnt-offerings: The Sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit, a broken and contrite heart (O God) thou wilt not deſpiſe*. And under the *New Teſtament*, That *ſpiritual* Worſhip, and That *Chriſtian* Practice of Moral Duties, which ſucceeded in the place of *literal* Sacrifices, is hence very elegantly ſtiled *A Sacrifice* or *Offering*. By *Malachi*, 'tis *before-hand* ſtiled *prophetically*, a *Pure Offering*, ch. i. 11. By the *Apoſtle*, *after* its eſtabliſhment, 'tis called a * *Spiritual Sacrifice*; an *odour of a ſweet ſmell, a ſacrifice acceptable, well-pleaſing to God*, (Phil. iv. 18.) And in the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, ch. xiii. 15. we are Thus exhorted; *By him therefore*, that is, By or Through Chriſt, *let us offer the* Sacrifice of Praiſe *to God continually, that is the Fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his Name*: Alſo *to do good and to communicate, forget not*; *for with ſuch* Sacrifices *God is well-pleaſed*. From which *manner of ſpeaking*, 'tis very obvious to obſerve, by the Way; how abſurdly ſome *Modern* Writers, from the *Ancients* ſtiling the *Euchariſt* an *unbloody Sacrifice*, have inferred that 'tis in *ſome real and* literal Senſe a *Sacrifice*: Whereas the *Ancients*, on the contrary, uſed the word *Sacrifice* in the ſame Senſe here, as the *Apoſtle* calls *Praiſe* and *Works*

* 1 Peter ii. 5.

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of Praiſe a *Sacrifice*; nay, in the ſame Senſe, as by a ſtill more ſublime figure, he ſays of *Chriſtians*, Phil. iii. 3. that *We are the circumciſion*; That is, that *Chriſtians* are by real *Holineſs purified* unto God a *peculiar people*, more truly than the *Jews* were by the typical *Ceremony* of *Circumciſion*.

Laſtly, THE Moral Purity and Virtue of ſincere Chriſtians, is in the Text ſtiled, not only a *Sacrifice*, but a Living *Sacrifice*; to expreſs more emphatically, how much the Service of a *rational living perſon* is more valuable in the Sight of God, than the Sacrifice of a *ſlain Beaſt*. By the ſame Analogy of Speech, Chriſtians are ſtiled by St. *Peter*, *Living Stones*, 1 Pet. ii. 5; to ſignify their being parts of That *Spiritual* Building or Temple of God, which is his *Church* or the Whole Body of his Faithful Servants, much more precious in his Sight than any Temple literally built with hands. After the ſame manner *Chriſt*, in oppoſition to the *Jews typical* Approach to God in the Holy Place through the Veil of the Temple, is ſtiled a *New and* Living *Way*, Heb. x. 20. And in general, *all outward Forms and Ceremonies* whatſoever, are in Scripture called a *dead letter*; in compariſon with the *Spirit* and *reality*, of true *Virtue and Righteouſneſs*. Which *real Virtue and Righteouſneſs* in the whole courſe of mens lives, is, in the fulleſt and moſt complete Senſe of the phraſe, *preſenting themſelves unto God a* Living *Sacrifice*: Rom. vi. 11, 13. *Reckon ye yourſelves*, ſays the Apoſtle, (with which exhortation I ſhall conclude,) *Reckon ye yourſelves to be* dead *indeed unto ſin, but* alive *unto God, thro' Jeſus Chriſt our Lord*; —— *yielding yourſelves unto God, as thoſe that are* alive *from the dead*; *and your members as inſtruments of righteouſneſs unto God.*

SERMON VII.

Of the unchangeable Difference of Good and Evil.

ISAIAH V. 20.

Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkneſs for light and light for darkneſs; that put bitter for ſweet and ſweet for bitter.

THE reaſonableneſs of Religion, is the great condemnation of Sinners; and the Folly of Wickedneſs is moſt evidently reproved, by ſhowing it to be contrary both to the Nature of *Man* and to the Reaſon of *Things*, as well as to the poſitive Will and Command of God. The Diſtinction of Moral Actions is in itſelf as neceſſary and as manifeſt, as the Differences of natural and ſenſible Objects; and 'tis a greater and juſter reproach to the Underſtanding of a Man, not to diſcern theſe *its* proper Objects; than 'tis a weakneſs and defect in the Organs of the Senſes, not to diſtinguiſh Theirs. Light and Darkneſs are ſo abſolutely contrary to each other, and Sweetneſs ſo ſenſibly different from Bitter,

that no man can mistake or confound these things, without having wholly lost the use of those Senses, by which they were intended to be discerned. Pain and Pleasure are so directly opposite, that nothing less than the loss of Life itself, can make us insensible of *Them*, or hinder us from preferring the one, and avoiding the other. Moral Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice, the Happiness and the Diseases of the Mind, are as truly and as widely different in their own nature; as the Perceptions of our outward Senses: And God has endued us with Faculties of the Soul as well fitted to distinguish them, as the Bodily Senses are to discern corporeal Objects. If any man, notwithstanding this, will obstinately call Evil Good, and Good Evil, and will deny all Distinction between Virtue and Vice; he must as much have laid aside the use of his natural Reason and Understanding, the Judgment and Discernment of his mind; as he that would confound Light and Darkness, must contradict his Senses, and deny the Evidence of his clearest Sight. And when such a person falls finally into unavoidable Misery and the just Punishment of Sin, he will no more deserve Pity and Compassion, than one that falls down a Precipice because he would not open his Eyes to discern that Light, which should have guided and directed him in his way. Misery and Destruction must necessarily be the effect of neglecting those Rules, on which both God and Nature have made the Life and Happiness of the *Soul* to depend; as certainly as the Destruction of the *Body* must be the speedy Consequence of neglecting the difference between things wholesome and poisonous. And so much the more deserved and the less pitiable is the Destruction of wilful and impe-

impenitent Sinners, by how much the clearer the difference is between Good and Evil; and by how much the more obſtinately they muſt ſhut their eyes, that they may not ſee the ſtrong Light of Reaſon and Conſcience, the Excellency and Neceſſity of Virtue, and the plain and only way to true Happineſs. *Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs; that put bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter.*

In the following Diſcourſe upon which words, I ſhall endeavour to ſhow, *1ſt*, That there is originally in the very *Nature* of things, a neceſſary and eternal Difference between Good and Evil, between Virtue and Vice; which the Reaſon of things does itſelf oblige men to have a conſtant Regard to. *2dly*, That God, by his ſupreme and abſolute Authority, and by expreſs Declaration of his Will in Holy Scripture, has eſtabliſhed and confirmed this original Difference of things; and will ſupport and maintain it by his immediate Power and Government in the World. And *3dly*, I ſhall draw ſome Obſervations from the whole, which may be of uſe to us in Practice.

I. *Firſt*; There is originally in the very Nature of things, a neceſſary and eternal Difference between Good and Evil, between Virtue and Vice; which the Reaſon of things does itſelf oblige men to have a conſtant Regard to. This is *ſuppoſed* in the Text, by the Prophet's comparing the Difference between Good and Evil, to that moſt obvious and ſenſible Difference of Light and Darkneſs. And 'tis not without great Reaſon, that he ſuppoſes this Difference of Good and Evil to be ſo plain and ſelf-evident, as if it could not be proved by any thing more clear and manifeſt than itſelf. For in like manner as any man,

man, who ſhould be ſo abſurd as to contend, that there was no Difference between Light and Darkneſs; could not be confuted by any Argument more ſtrong, than the Evidence of his own Senſes: So to any one who will perverſely deny all Difference between Good and Evil, it is not eaſy to offer any better Argument, to convince him of this great and fundamental Truth; than by appealing to the Reaſon and Conſcience of his own Mind. Not becauſe there is any real Difficulty or Obſcurity in the Thing itſelf to be proved; but on the contrary, becauſe it is ſo very plain and evident, that ſcarcely any foreign Argument can by the ſtricteſt Proof make it more clear and certain than it was before. When men will deny a Truth, which is as evident, as the Difference between Light and Darkneſs; Puniſhment then is the only proper remedy for ſuch Obſtinacy; and very juſtly may thoſe men be excluded from all the Benefits of humane Society, who will not have any regard to that Difference of things, on which alone all the Happineſs of Society depends. *Natural* Good and Evil, in ſuch inſtances wherein we are perſonally concerned, and where the Effect is not very remote, we are always ſufficiently ſenſible of, and abundantly able and careful to diſtinguiſh. Death and Life, Sickneſs and Health, Pleaſure and Pain, Poverty and Riches, Honour and Diſgrace, are Differences of condition, concerning which there is no diſpute, and no danger that men will be careleſs or negligent. Death and Life, Pain and Pleaſure, Happineſs and Miſery, men cannot but diſtinguiſh; and muſt of neceſſity always purſue the one, and endeavour to avoid the other. Yet in theſe very things is originally founded the Difference of *Moral* Good and Evil, which they are ſo apt

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to neglect; And 'tis only for want of attending to the Iſſues and Conſequences of things, that men are ever guilty of ſo fatal a Miſtake. That which tends truly and univerſally, to the Perfection of humane Nature, and to the general Happineſs of Mankind; is Moral Good, as well as Natural: And Moral Evil, is that which corrupts and depraves and diſhonours our Nature, and renders it truly miſerable; which diſquiets mens Minds, and weakens their Bodies; which ruins their Eſtates, and deſtroys their Reputation; which breaks Laws, and diſturbs good Government, and diſorders and confounds the World. Theſe reſpective Effects are ſometimes remote indeed, and at a diſtance; and This is that which deceives and impoſes upon men: But they are nevertheleſs moſt certain, and neceſſary Effects; and of direct, proper, and natural conſequence: So that even in Nature, Virtue and Vice, Wiſdom and Folly, are as neceſſarily diſtinct, and as unalterable as Happineſs and Miſery themſelves. God hath ſo conſtituted our Nature, that the ſame things which truly and univerſally promote our Happineſs, are likewiſe the chief inſtances of our Duty; and the univerſal performance of our Duty, is plainly the moſt natural and direct means to attain true and laſting Happineſs. The Accidents of this World, and the extreme Wickedneſs of Men, make it ſometimes indeed prove otherwiſe for a ſhort ſeaſon: But the *final* Event of things, is always ſuch as I have now deſcribed; and the Order of Nature *tends* to make it be ſo likewiſe, even in all the *preſent* intermediate ſpaces of time. The Fear and Love of God, the Imitation of his Nature, and the Obeying of his Commands; the Senſe of *His* preſent and future Favour, who is the

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ſupreme Lord and infinitely powerful Governour of the whole Word; is evidently the only foundation of ſolid Peace and Satisfaction of Mind, in which a rational and immortal Spirit can poſſible acquieſce: Piety therefore towards God, is as neceſſarily good in itſelf, and of as unchangeable Obligation in Nature and Reaſon; as the Creator is of neceſſity infinitely ſuperior to his Creatures; and as ſettled peace and ſatisfaction of Mind, which can only ariſe from the ſenſe of *his* Favour, is neceſſarily the ground and condition of our Happineſs. Temperance and Sobriety, Diligence and Patience, the due government of our Appetites, and reſtraint of our Paſſions, are the only *natural and moſt certain* means of preſerving the health of our Bodies, of improving the faculties of our Minds, and of keeping ourſelves conſtantly in ſuch Temper and Diſpoſition, as is neceſſary to qualify us for the regular performance of all other duties of Life. He that ſuffers himſelf to be deprived of his Reaſon, either by violent Paſſion, or by great Intemperance and Exceſs, has no guard left, that can ſecure him from falling into the greateſt Crimes. Such government of ourſelves therefore, is as neceſſarily good and obligatory in the nature of the thing itſelf, as it is confeſſedly uſeful and excellent in its Effects. Juſtice and Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs and Charity, Faithfulneſs and Truth, Subjection to Government, Obedience to Laws, due Reſpect to Authority, according to mens ſeveral Qualities and Stations in the world; are the only poſſible means, of preſerving the Peace and Welfare of the Publick, the Order of Societies, and mutual Protection and Support; on which depends all our Happineſs, all our Enjoyments, and whatſoever is moſt valuable amongſt

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men: These things therefore are as unchangeably Wise and Good, and the practice of them as indispensably enforced upon us by the eternal Reason of things, and of as indispensable Obligation; as it is natural and necessary for us to desire both our own private Happiness, and the publick Welfare of Mankind. Wicked and unreasonable men, who will be governed by no rule, but their present Appetites; look not so far before them, as to make true judgments and take right measures concerning their proper Happiness. Whatever gratifies their present Lust or Passion, That they chuse as Good and conducive to their Happiness; not considering that in the course of things it may be the greatest Evil in the world, either directly to themselves, or consequentially by being injurious to other men, destructive of publick Peace, and Order, and Government, and so in the end pernicious even in this present world to themselves also. For want of this Consideration it is, that they confound the natural and eternal Differences of things; judging of Good and Evil, by no other measure, but by their own sudden Passions, changeable Appetites, disorderly and unreasonable Lusts. If they get beyond this, and are forced to confess that the Necessity of things, the very Nature and Constitution of the world, lest every thing should run immediately into the utmost Confusion, obliges them to be under some kind of Rules and Restraints; yet, far from having any generous and noble principles of true Virtue and Goodness, they will go no further than they are compelled, nor acknowledge any other Difference between Good and Evil, than what is forced upon them by the Authority of Law or Custom. And yet concerning These also, it is as evi-

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dent, that Good and Evil, are things prior and superior to all humane Laws, and which they cannot alter; as that the Difference of Light and Darkness does not depend upon the Will and Pleasure of men, and cannot be changed by them. The true and only reason of all humane Laws, is to enforce and secure the practice of such things, as are before in their own Nature good, and useful, and profitable to Society. For, if this were not the case, it would not be of any Importance, whether these or the very contrary practices were enjoined by Laws. 'Tis not therefore barely the Force and Obligation of the Law, which makes a thing become good and reasonable to be practised; (though in all indifferent things, This is indeed a sufficient Obligation;) but 'tis the Wisdom and Goodness of the Things themselves, that is the Ground and Foundation of all wise Laws; and which makes it necessary, that men should by Authority and by Laws be compelled to do that, which if there had been no Law at all, it would nevertheless have been reasonable and good for them to do. We are infinitely obliged by Nature and Reason, to worship God and adore, to pray and to give thanks, to the Supreme Author and Preserver of our Being; and to do all the Good we can to Men, in our several stations; promoting universally the Happiness of our Fellow-creatures, and the Peace and good Order of the World. 'Tis fit the Fear and Authority of Laws, should prevent such men from opposing and hindering this great End, who perhaps would not otherwise be restrained by the Obligation of right Reason, or by the Fear of God: But the Obligation of right Reason would still have been the same, though no humane Laws have

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laid any ſuch Compulſion upon men: Nay even, if it could be ſuppoſed that all poſitive Laws and all humane Authority whatſoever, ſhould require us to act the contrary part; deſtroy and do all evil to each other without difference or reſpect; If all the Nations in the world, ſhould conſpire in having ſuch a Falſe Notion of Honour and Glory, as to account it truer greatneſs to deſtroy and ruin, than to protect Mankind and preſerve the Liberties of Nations, and the common Rights of humane Societies; yet it would neither be wiſe nor good, nor reaſonable, neither truly great nor honourable ſo to do; any more than mens agreeing to call poiſon wholſom, would make it really be ſo; or the opinion or declaration of any number of Men, could make Darkneſs put on the Nature of Light. Wicked and unreaſonable men, powerful Tyrants and Oppreſſors, the greateſt Debauchees and Purſuers of unlawful Pleaſures; when they are above the cenſure of all humane Laws, and have little or no reverence for thoſe that are divine; yet often know that they do evil, and cannot deny but that it would be better to do otherwiſe. They are ſenſible that the practice of Virtue and Goodneſs, is infinitely more reaſonable than Debauchery and Injuſtice; And though their Luſts and Paſſions have ſuch Dominion over them, that they cannot forbear doing unjuſt and unrighteous Actions; yet they ſee at the ſame time a more excellent Law, they know better things, and cannot but approve them as more wiſe and reaſonable. This is a true Obligation upon them, to return into the ways of Virtue and Religion: The Senſe of this Obligation they cannot get rid of; the Uneaſineſs which it gives their Minds, they cannot ſhake off:

'Tis This makes them pass a severe Judgment upon their own past Actions, whenever they reflect on them; and to chuse even the present Pleasure or unjust Acquisition with difficulty and remorse: The reproach of Conscience imbitters all their sinful Enjoyments; and they secretly condemn themselves, where the Laws of men have no power to condemn them. The crimes they commit, are a continual slavery and burden upon their Minds. And were it not, that evil Habits and ungoverned Lusts keep them by an unwilling choice in a perpetual bondage; they would infinitely rather chuse the satisfaction of being innocent, and wish always that they could separate the Pleasure or Profit from the Crime. The Actions of men that live vertuously and religiously, they cannot but approve of; and condemn in others the very same Practices, which they are guilty of themselves. They will trust a virtuous man in any business of importance, much rather than the promoters and partakers of their Vices; and desire always to have their affairs managed, by men of Uprightness, Righteousness, and Integrity. In fine, they *at last* wish *themselves* always in the *place* of the Righteous; and, however they have *lived*, yet *O that they could but* die *at least the* death *of the righteous, and that their* last end *might be like his*; and thereby clearly acknowledge the Excellency of Virtue, its Necessity in order to the publick welfare of Mankind, and the Unchangeableness of its Obligation. By all these things, the wickedest of men do themselves give Testimony to the Truth of this 1*st* general Proposition, *viz.* That there is originally in the very Nature of things, a necessary and eternal Difference between Good and Evil, Virtue

tue and Vice; which the Reason of things does itself oblige men to have a constant regard to.

II. *Secondly*; God has moreover, by his supreme and absolute Authority, and by express declaration of his Will in Holy Scripture, by his positive Will and Command, established and confirmed this original Difference of things, and will support and maintain it by his immediate Power and Government in the world. The former Proposition, *viz.* the natural and unchangeable Difference of Good and Evil, is contained in the *Supposition* in the Text, wherein this Distinction is *presumed* to be equally evident with that of Light and Darkness. The latter Proposition, *viz.* God's interposing moreover his supreme Power and Authority, to confirm and support this same original Difference of things; is contained in the positive *declaration* in the Text, wherein a severe *Wo* is denounced against all such as shall attempt to confound them. *Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.* That such is the Will of God, as well as the Nature of things; may in good measure be gathered even from what we *naturally* know concerning him. For God being the alone Author and Creator of all things; 'tis plain their Natures are respectively such as he was pleased to make them; and their relations one to another are the result of that Constitution, which the Creator in his Wisdom has thought fit to establish; the *Nature* therefore of things is the *Law* of God; and whatever is agreeable or disagreeable to right Reason, must be so likewise to the Will of the Author of Nature. Wherefore since Good and Evil, as has been already shown, are

neceſſarily and eternally different in the Nature of things, as Light and Darkneſs, are in the Frame of the World, and in the Judgment of our Senſes; 'tis manifeſtly the Will of God, that the one ſhould be the rule and determiner of our Moral actions, as the other is the guide and direction of our Natural ones. *The Light of the Body is the Eye*, as our Saviour himſelf expreſſes it. St *Matt.* vi. 22. meaning to ſignify by an eaſy ſimilitude, that our Minds ought to be guided by Reaſon and Truth, as our Bodies are by the Sight of the Eyes. In this reſpect, the Light of Nature itſelf ſufficiently condemns all the workers of Unrighteouſneſs; making it appear that the practice of Iniquity in every inſtance, is as truly and for the very ſame reaſon a direct contempt of the Authority of God, as it is an abſurd confounding of the natural Reaſons and Proportions of things. The Order and Harmony of God's Creation, depends upon every Creature's acting according to the law of its Nature: And this Law of Nature to *Men*, is, our Obligation to govern ourſelves by that particular Underſtanding and Knowledge, whereby we are diſtinguiſhed from the inferiour part of the Creation; whereby we are enabled to diſcern between Good and Evil; and by which, as 'tis expreſſed in the book of *Job*, *God has taught us more than the beaſts of the field, and made us wiſer than the fowls of heaven.* God has indued us with Faculties, by which we are able to ſee and diſtinguiſh what will promote the Welfare and Happineſs of the world; and he has given us thoſe Faculties for that very End, that by diſtinguiſhing things rightly, we might direct our Choice to ſuch actions always as are moſt univerſally uſeful and beneficial to Mankind. God him-

himſelf, in his government of the World, does always what in the whole is beſt; that is, what tends moſt to the Good of the whole Creation; and ſo far as *We* are capable of underſtanding his Attributes and manner of acting, ſo far 'tis manifeſt *we* are obliged to imitate *his* Nature; and in our ſeveral ſtations to conform ourſelves to the likeneſs of ſo excellent an Example, by the ſtudy and practice of all Goodneſs and Holineſs, Righteouſneſs and Truth. This is the firſt ground and foundation of all Religion: This is that Knowledge of God and of his Will, which Nature implants, and Reaſon confirms, and all the Wiſdom in the world centers in, and all the Happineſs of rational Creatures depends upon.

But becauſe the vain Curioſity and ſceptical Diſcourſes, the vicious Inclinations and unreaſonale Paſſions, the evil Affections and perverſe Diſputings of men of corrupt minds, have ſometimes as it were raiſed a duſt to obſcure this cleareſt of all *natural* Truths; Truth, concerning the neceſſary and eternal Difference of Good and Evil; even in like manner as certain ridiculous Philoſophers of old, undertook by ſubtil intricacies to confound the plaineſt Differences of natural and ſenſible things, to prove that Snow was black, or, as the Text expreſſes it, that Light is the ſame with Darkneſs, and Bitter with Sweet; therefore God in all the *ſupernatural Revelations* he has made of his Will, and moſt expreſsly in this laſt Revelation of the Goſpel, has placed the Sum of affairs in reſtoring Virtue and Goodneſs which is the Image of God, and in rooting out Vice in which conſiſts the Kingdom of the Devil; in aſcertaining the Difference of Good and Evil, and aſſigning to each of them their proper Reward.

Wo unto them, ſaith he, *that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs*: Iſ. v. 20. *that rebel againſt the light*, Job. xxiv. 13. *that love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil*; St. Joh. iii. 19. This eternal Difference of Good and Evil, God has now confirmed with new Authority, illuſtrated with greater Light, diſtinguiſh'd with plainer and clearer bounds, and inforced mens Obſervation of this Rule, with new Motives and ſtronger Obligations. For this he ſent his Son into the world, to be born, to live and to die for us; that he might effectually deſtroy the works of the Devil, and overthrow the kingdom of Darkneſs: For this he has expreſsly revealed his Wrath from Heaven, againſt all Ungodlineſs and Unrighteouſneſs of Men; that the eternal Difference of Good and Evil, when men had neglected to be moved by the voice of Nature and Reaſon, might be ſupported by divine Authority and by God himſelf ſpeaking. To this all the precepts of the Goſpel tend, and all our Saviour's Sermons terminate in it. To this all his mercies, all his patience leads; and all his judgments are intended to compel us. To this all his promiſes gently invite and draw us, and all his threatnings loudly command and preſs us. This is the End, to which all other things are directed as the Means. This is finally good and profitable unto Men. On this depends all the Bleſſings of the preſent Life, and all the Happineſs of a future Eternity.

III. I proceed in the *Third* and *laſt* place to draw ſome Obſervations from the whole, which may be of uſe to us in Practice. And

1ſt, FROM what has been ſaid we may obſerve, that

that Religion and Virtue are truly moſt agreeable to Nature, and that Vice and Wickedneſs are of all things the moſt contrary to it. 'Tis naturally the part of underſtanding and reaſonable Beings, to obſerve the differences that are in the Natures of Things; and therefore if Good and Evil, be naturally and neceſſarily different; 'tis manifeſt it muſt needs be agreeable to Nature (unleſs ſtrangely corrupted with evil habits,) that men ſhould live religiouſly by diſcerning and choofing what is good, and avoiding what is evil. Men do indeed frequently err in this matter, and are wilfully blinded by innumerable Corruptions, by cuſtoms and evil habits, by pleaſure and intereſts, by falſe opinions and looſe practices; and then, to excuſe and vindicate themſelves, they take refuge in the Follies of Infidelity, and preſumptuouſly call *Light Darkneſs and Darkneſs Light*; And as a Palate vitiated by a long diſeaſe, ceaſes to be able to diſtinguiſh between Sweet and Bitter; ſo theſe hardned Sinners mock at all difference of Good and Evil: But ſtill the natures of things remain unalterably what they were, and cannot but juſtify themſelves to the reaſon and underſtanding even of thoſe very men that unreaſonably deny them. 'Tis not Nature, (as they weakly and falſely reproach it,) but unnatural and corrupt inclinations, that lead them to Wickedneſs. Nature and Reaſon, as well as Revelation, call upon Men to be religious; and Virtue and Goodneſs are as truly agreeable to the Mind, as Light is to the Eyes, or Sweetneſs to the Taſte. Their own Conſciences reproach them as often as they act otherwiſe; and no worldly Advantages whatſoever, no Power upon Earth, can ever diſcharge them from this Obligation. *Solomon*

lomon had greater Experience, and made more Obſervations upon theſe things, than any other man that ever lived; And the Sum of all *his* Obſervations, is the Reflexion, *Eccleſ.* ii. 13. *Then I ſaw that Wiſdom excelleth Folly, as far as Light excelleth Darkneſs.*

2*dly*, FROM what has been ſaid, it follows, that the knowledge of the moſt important and fundamental Doctrines of Religion, muſt be very eaſy to be attained; and that groſs ignorance of our Duty, can by no means be innocent or excuſable; our Minds being as naturally fitted to underſtand the moſt neceſſary parts of it, as our Eyes are to judge of Colours, or our Palate of Taſtes. *If any man will do his Will, he ſhall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God.* To diſcover that we ought to Fear and Love, to worſhip and obey the great Creator of all things, the Author and Preſerver of our Beings, and the Giver of all things we enjoy or hope for: To underſtand that Juſtice is better than Iniquity, and Love and Charity than Violence and Oppreſſion; doing good to Mankind than conquering of Nations, and preſerving the World than ravaging and deſtroying it: To find out that Temperance and Sobriety, is more excellent than Debauchery; and wiſe and reaſonable Counſels, than the ſudden impulſes of Luſts and Paſſion; Theſe things require no great depth of knowledge, no nice and tedious diſputes, nothing that can perplex or confound the underſtanding even of the meaneſt perſon: They are eaſy and obvious, plain and ſelf-evident, and viſible as the cleareſt day-light: Yet theſe are the things of the greateſt importance, and which are of the higheſt concernment for all men to know and underſtand:

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These are the things by which the World subsists; by which alone all Order and Government is maintained. Men that have time and abilities may lawfully and commendably and to very excellent purposes, study some things of greater difficulty. There is variety enough in the *Works* of God, to employ the whole capacity of men and angels to all eternity; There are depths and secrets in the dispensations of *Providence*; There are *some* difficulties in some circumstances of the *Laws* of God, and in the Revelations of his Will; And these are a worthy employment for the most enlarged understandings upon Earth. But the things which are of absolute and indispensable necessity to the happiness of men, these, under the Government of a Just and Wise and Good God, it cannot be imagined but they must be universally level to the capacities of all Mankind.

3*dly*, FROM hence it appears, that the judgments of God upon impenitent Sinners, who obstinately disobey the most reasonable and necessary Laws, in the World; are true and just and righteous Judgments. Had God commanded us things only in their own nature indifferent; yet *even here* Obedience to the Supreme Lord of all things, would have been highly reasonable; and all Creatures could not but confess his Justice, if they were severely punished for Disobedience to *such* Commands. But when the Supreme Power and Authority of God, imposes scarcely any thing upon us, but what the very nature of the things themselves makes necessary, what the Consciences of Sinners themselves cannot but approve as most reasonable and excellent, and what the Happiness of man immediately and directly consists in, as well as the Law of God makes it his Duty to observe,

ſerve, how much more muſt Sinners now confeſs before all the World the righteouſneſs of God's judgments manifeſted in their deſtruction, if they will not by his Goodneſs be led to Repentance!

4thly, FROM hence we may conclude, that what ever Doctrine is contrary to the nature and attributes of God, whatever is plainly unwiſe or wicked, whatever tends to confound the eſſential and eternal differences of Good and Evil, every ſuch Doctrine, how plauſibly ſoever it may be ſupported, muſt neceſſarily be falſe. By this rule the Heathens might have diſcovered the Folly of that Idolatry, which taught them to worſhip ſuch Gods, as they themſelves had firſt feigned like to the moſt wicked men. And by the ſame Rule, men of Underſtanding and Probity will eaſily condemn moſt of the corruptions both in Doctrine and Worſhip, which have in many places among Chriſtians themſelves crept in under a falſe pretence of divine Revelation. And at the ſame time, it is a credible and excellent evidence of the Truth of the pure and uncorrupted Doctrine of the Goſpel as delivered in Scripture; that, beſides the Authority of Miracles and Prophecies, it is inwardly in the Nature of the thing itſelf, a conformity to the divine Nature and Attributes, a confirmation and improvement of our natural Notions of Good and Evil, and of the Rewards and Puniſhments in a future ſtate, and Aſſurance of the Reconciliation of God to repenting Sinners through the Mediation of Chriſt, and a direct Promoter of the univerſal Happineſs of Mankind.

Laſtly; FROM what has been ſaid it is certain, that every Perſon or Doctrine, which would ſeparate Religion from a holy Life; and make Religion to

consist merely in such speculative Opinions, as may be defended by an ill Liver; or in such outward Solemnities of Worship, as may be performed by a vicious and wicked man; does greatly corrupt Religion. The design and the very essence of Religion, is to make men good and happy: The design of the Revelation of the Gospel, is to destroy Superstition, and to restore the Truth of Religion, by correcting mens Opinions and reforming their Manners, by introducing Repentance, and securing to us the Acceptableness of it through the merits of Christ. If without this, men will pretend to be religious by any other method, they wholly mistake the Nature of Religion, and the design of the Gospel of Christ. If they will not add to their Faith Virtue, but think it sufficient that they hold the Truth, though it be in Unrighteousness; they are like the man who, our Saviour tells us, *built his house upon the Sand:* Their very Faith itself will but increase their Guilt; and the Truth which they profess, will but the more severely condemn them for being workers of Iniquity. *Which Condemnation that we may all escape, God of his infinite mercy grant,* &c.

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SERMON VIII.

Of the Nature of Moral and Positive Duties.

MATT. xxii. 40.

On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

THESE words are part of our Saviour's answer to a captious Question proposed to him by one of the Pharisees; Which *was the great Commandment in the Law?* It appears from the parallel place in St. *Mark*, ch. xii. ver. 33. that *the comparison* was made between the eternal and unchangeable Duties of Piety and Righteousness on the one hand, and the external Precepts of the Law of *Moses, burnt offerings and sacrifices*, on the other. For when our Saviour had given this Answer to the Question proposed; that the first and great commandment of all, was this, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength*; and that the second was like unto it, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self*; and added, that *on these two*

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commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets; that is, that these are the ultimate End and Design of religion; and all positive precepts, only subordinate to these, and as means to these great Ends; The Pharisee convinced with the *clearness*, and pleased with the *goodness* of the Answer, replies, ver. 32, 33. *Well, Master, thou has said the Truth; for there is one God, and there is none other but he; And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength; and to love his neighbour as himself*, is *more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.*

OUR Saviour's determination of the Question proposed to him, was plain and clear, full and decisive; that there was no Comparison at all, between the excellency of ritual and of moral Duties. The Love of God and of our Neighbour, are the Life and Essence of true Religion; the highest improvement and the greatest possible perfection of our rational Nature; The Sum and Fountain, *in* which all other moral Duties are contained, *from* which they all spring, and *to* which they may all be reduced; and they are the ultimate *End*, for the Security of which, all *positive* Commandments, were ever given at all. All the precepts of the Law of *Moses*, tend to this great End; All the Exhortations of the Prophets, are directed to the same Design; and nothing is truly valuable in the sight of God, but what is derived from these Fountains, and terminates in these excellent Ends.

IT may perhaps justly be wondred, *how* the *Jews* in our Saviour's time *could* possibly be so ignorant of the nature of true Religion, and so possessed with false Notions concerning it; as to make *Any* competition,

tition, between the value of mere external Forms, and the Real Practice of True Virtue; after God had so frequently declared to them by his Prophets, that their *Sacrifices and oblations, their washings and purifications, their feasts and solemn assemblies, their fasts and severest humiliations, were so far from being acceptable in his sight,* if not accompanied with the practice of Justice, *Truth, Righteousness, and charity*; that on the contrary, *without* these virtues, these very rites, though of his own institution, were the *greatest abomination in his sight*; as being only evidences, of a deeper hypocrisy. *To what purpose is the multitude of your Sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of he-goats:* But *Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow*; Then *though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* Is. i. 11.

But yet, notwithstanding these plain and frequent declarations of the Prophets, 'tis evident in the whole History of the Gospel, that the most eminent and famous men, men of the greatest character and esteem for learning and piety among the Jews, Scribes and Pharisees, Doctors, and expounders of the Law, were, in our Saviour's time, almost universally fallen under this great and fatal mistake. They were very strict and zealous even to the highest degree of superstition, in observing the outward rites and ceremonies of the Law; concerning which, our Saviour,

with great exactness of expression, says, *that they ought not indeed to be left undone:* But at the same time *they neglected the practice, of the great and weightier and more indispensable Duties, of Truth and Righteousness and Goodness towards all men.* They were very strict and superstitious in outward Purifications, in the *washing of pots and cups, and the like*; while they took no care at all to purify their own *Minds, from unrighteousness and all uncleanness.* And if we duly consider the corrupt estate of humane Nature; it may not perhaps be very difficult, to give an account *whence* all this Evil arises. For, to men of corrupt affections and indulged vicious habits, nothing is so difficult as the practice of virtue and true religion; To mortify long-indulged Appetites, to cleanse themselves from all filthiness both of flesh and Spirit, to conquer vicious inclinations, to root out confirmed habits, to govern unruly passions; these things *are like cutting off a right hand, and pulling out a right eye*; or, as *Nicodemus* expresses it, *like a man's being born again when he is old.* And yet, in order to keep up a reputation in the World, *'tis* absolutely necessary, that Men have *some* pretence of zeal for Religion. Corrupt Minds therefore, who will not be at the pains to practice true Virtue, and yet desire to serve themselves of the temporal advantages which the name and credit of religion is apt to gain in the World; *must* call something else, *must* call certain Forms or Opinions, by the Name of religion, instead of That which really and only is so. They *must* make religion to consist, in things *more visible* to the eyes of the vulgar, and better fitted to procure the applause of the World; than the sincerest Love of God,

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and of our neighbour; than meekness and simplicity, Justice and Charity, Holiness and Purity of Mind, and the Practice of other the like excellent Virtues; which are so much the more sincere and of the greater value in the sight of God, as they are seated in the heart and soul itself, and are less exposed to the eye of the world. This *One* Mistake, is the great and general corruption of mankind: This has at all Times and in all Places been the First and the Last Errour in matters of Religion. Thus did the *Pharisees* in our Saviour's days: And Thus among *Christians*, in all places, especially where Popery has prevailed, and in Other places in proportion as the same Spirit has gained ground, How has the worship of God been corrupted, and almost wholly turned into Pomp and Superstition? How have the empty forms and appearances of Religion, shut out the true Love of God, which consists in Imitation of his Nature and in Obedience to his holy and divine Commands? How hath false zeal for vain and corrupt doctrines, for the doctrines and Traditions of particular *Men* or Sects and *Bodies of Men*, turned Christian Love, Meekness and Charity, those prime and fundamental Duties, into that which is the *most directly opposite* to the whole End and Design of *all* Religion, even into the greatest and most inhumane Cruelties? How have vain penances, and repeated confessions and absolutions, and other weak and deceitful observances, been substituted in the room of true repentance and reformation of Life? In a word, how numberless have been the inventions of men, and what pains have they not been willing to take, to reconcile the *Name* of religion with the *practice* of wickedness, and to make great zeal for

God, consistent with being workers of Iniquity? And how totally have been neglected those Great and Eternal Duties, which are briefly summed up in the *Love of God and of our neighbour? on which two Commandments our Saviour* (in the Text) affirms, *that all the Law and the Prophets depend:* That is; All Christian Duties are either *contained in* these; or are *subservient to* them: All *moral* Duties may be reduced to these Heads, and are contained *under* them; and all *positive* Injunctions are only subservient *to* them, and but as means to these Ends.

I. *First*; ALL *moral* Duties are contained *in*, and may be reduced *to*, these two Heads; the Love of God and of our Neighbour.

GOD, is a Being of infinite and unlimited Perfections; the Fountain of all Goodness and Happiness; who contains in himself all things that are excellent, all things that are truly worthy of Admiration or Love; and from whom, as from their only Fountain, are derived all Excellencies, that are found in the *whole* or in any *parts* of the Creation. To *Love* God therefore, is to have always fixt upon our minds a just regard to the Perfections of his Nature; and a due Sense of his inestimable Goodness, in communicating so much Happiness to his Creatures. And This, if carefully attended to, so as to produce its just Effect and natural consequence, must necessarily have such an Influence upon our Practice, as to cause us to Praise and to Adore him continually; to devote our selves wholly to *his* Service, who is the only Author of our Being, and of whatever Good we enjoy or hope for; to worship him constantly, and him only, who alone has the Power of all things in his own Hands, and employs that

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Power under the Direction of infinite Goodness, only for the Benefit and Welfare of all his Creatures, according to their several Capacities. How inconsistent with this Love of God is it, to prefer sinful and corrupt enjoyments, short and transitory and unrighteous Pleasures, before that infinite and eternal Happiness, which God has proposed to us in the fruition of himself? and how will This naturally oblige us to govern our Passions, to moderate our Appetites, to restrain all unreasonable Desires, to despise all the allurements of Sin, and (in a word) to apply ourselves wholly to the Observation of his just and righteous Commands? Thus all the Duties of the first Table, which relate to God; and also all those Duties which respect ourselves, or the Government of our Passions and Appetites by the Rules of Reason and Religion; spring from the Love of God, as from their true Fountain; and are all necessarily contained in it, and may easily be reduced to it.

In like manner; The Duties of the second table, are all as plainly contained *under*, and may be reduced *to*, the Love of our *Neighbour*; as the Duties of the first Table, are to the Love of *God*. God created and sent us into this World on purpose, to do Good one to another; to love and to assist each other, in all the necessities and exigences of human life. In this, all his commandments terminate; for this, he proposes to us the example of his own infinite Goodness; This End whoever constantly aims at, and steadily pursues, will never greatly fail in the particulars of his Duty. He that loves his neighbour sincerely as himself; and is willing to do to all men, as he desires they should do to him; that thinks himself sent into the World on purpose to do Good

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to others, and look upon it as the Sum and End of his Duty, to promote the universal peace and happiness of mankind; will certainly upon this Principle regularly and uniformly perform all the parts of his Duty towards men; And this universal Love of his Neighbour, will as naturally spread itself into all the branches of a truly Christian conversation in the world, as a root or stock will in a fit and proper soil, regularly send forth branches, leaves and fruit, agreeable to its proper nature and kind. From this Fountain of universal Love and Charity, will certainly flow all those streams of virtue and good works, in which consists the Life and Beauty and Usefulness, and the true Excellency and Glory of Religion. Whoever is under the guidance of this one Principle, will naturally behave himself well in all relations, and perform the part of a wise and good man in all the different accidents and circumstances of Life. Such a one, will not fail to make it his business, to promote the publick Good; and delight to contribute as much as possible towards the Peace and Welfare of the World. He will naturally treat his Superiours with chearful Submission, his Benefactors with gratitude and all decent respect, his Equals with affability and readiness to do all offices of kindness, his Inferiours with gentleness, moderation, and charity. Thus evidently, under the Love of our Neighbour, are contained all the Duties of the second Table; and from it, as from their root or fountain, they all naturally and regularly flow. This is what the Apostle teaches, *Gal.* v. 14; *For, all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in This, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.* And still more expressly, *Rom.* xiii. 8. *Owe no man any thing but to Love one another,*

another, for he that loveth another, hath fulfilled the Law: For every particular precept, such as, *Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other Commandment, it is briefly comprehended in This saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self: Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law.* And our Saviour himself, St *Matt.* vii. 12. *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets;* or, as it is in the words of the Text, *on these commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets;* that is, in this are contained, in this do terminate, all the Commandments of God.

HAVING thus shown, which was the first thing I proposed, that all *Moral* Duties of life may be reduced to these two Heads, the Love of God and of our Neighbour. I proceed in the

II. *Second* place, to show that all *Positive* and *ritual* Injunctions, though in their proper place they *ought not to be left undone,* (as our Saviour himself expresses it,) yet they are but subordinate to These, and subservient to them; And this may abundantly be made appear by the following considerations.

1st, THAT the *moral* Duties of life, *the Love of God and of our Neighbour,* are things in their *own Nature* good and excellent, of eternal and necessary Obligation; which receive not their power of obliging, merely from their being commanded; but their obligation is eternal and absolutely unchangeable, as is the Nature of the things themselves. Our Obligation to Love God, arises from the Nature and Attri-

Attributes of God himſelf; and therefore that Obligation can no more ceaſe or be altered, than the Divine Nature and Attributes can be ſubject to change. In like manner, our Obligation to Love and do right to our Neighbour, ariſes from the Nature of Man, and from our relation one towards another; from that ſtate and condition, wherein God has created us; from the exigencies of Life, the neceſſity of ſocieties, and the equity, reaſon, and proportion of things. So long therefore as theſe things continue the ſame; ſo long this Obligation alſo muſt contiuue unalterable. Theſe Moral Duties therefore are by neceſſity and in their own nature, good and excellent: They are indiſpenſably neceſſary, to preſerve the Order and Happineſs of the World; they are neceſſary to the improvement and perfection of our own Minds; they are neceſſary to Qualify us and make us capable of that State of Glory, to which God has deſigned us hereafter: But all ritual and ceremonial Obſervances, have no intrinſick goodneſs in the nature of the things themſelves; nor any Obligation, but what ariſes merely from their being poſitively and occaſionally enjoyned. Their Obligation therefore is of a changeable Nature, depending wholly on the good Pleaſure of him that commands them; and conſequently though 'tis our Duty to perform them *when* and *where* they are enjoyned, yet they can never be compared or come in competition with Thoſe Duties, whoſe Obligation is neceſſary and eternal; and the Practice of which, has an intrinſick goodneſs and unchangeable excellency abſolutely, in the Nature of the things themſelves.

2dly, ALL Poſitive and ritual injunctions whatſoever, can be but ſubordinate to the Practice of moral

moral virtues; because these latter are the End for which the former are commanded, and the former can be considered only as Means to the latter. In the Perfection of Virtue and Goodness, consists the Image of *God*; and in the same likewise is placed the Chief Happiness of *Man*. In this therefore consists our Chief Good, on this depends our final Happiness, in this lies the Excellency and Perfection of our Nature. Consequently this must of necessity, be our ultimate End; this must be the principal scope of all our actions; and nothing else can be truly valuable or worthy of esteem, but only so far as it may be a means and assistance to attain this End. Ritual Observances in Religion, if they be such as truly increase our Devotion towards God; if they enlarge our Charity and Goodness towards Men; if they be such as are significant and remind us of our Obligation to Purity and Temperance in ourselves; they are then indeed of excellent Use, and (so far as they are commanded,) of indispensable Obligation. *Baptism*, as St *Peter* affirms, *does indeed save us*; 1 Pet. iii. 21; but it does so by being, not barely a washing away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good Conscience towards God. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper likewise confirms our Title to eternal Life; but it does so by renewing our obligation and our vows, to obey that Covenant upon which eternal Life was promised us in Christ. Circumcision in like manner, and the Purifications appointed under the Law, were means of Salvation to the *Jews*; yet not by any virtue in the things themselves, but as Instances of Obedience to the Will of God, and as representations of their Obligation to Purity and Holiness. Where these Observances are not used as

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Means to this End, they become altogether uſeleſs and unprofitable; *commandments which are not good, and precepts by which men ſhall not live*; as the Prophet expreſſes it. *Circumciſion, to them that obeyed not the* Law, *was accounted uncircumciſion*; Baptiſm and the Lord's Supper, to them that obey not the *Goſpel* in the courſe of a virtuous life, is but as waſhing a dead Corps in hopes to infuſe life into it, and an attempting to pleaſe God by profaning his Feaſt and deſpiſing his Ordinances. *The* End *of the commandment*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *is* Charity, *out of a pure heart, and of a good conſcience, and of faith unfeigned:* 1 Tim. i. 5. In a word; *The Kingdom of God*, ſaith our Saviour, *is* within *you*; St *Luke* xvii. 21: Every man's *Religion* is, not what he *profeſſes*, or what *ſhow* he makes in external obſervances; but what *influence* it *really* has upon the *Man himſelf*, in the habit of his mind, and in the courſe of his Actions, in his Family, in his Buſineſs, in his dealings with all Mankind, in his common converſation and even in his very Diverſions themſelves, as well as in his more ſolemn Acts of Prayer and Devotion. For, in like manner, as in our Saviour's Parable, *not the eating with unwaſhen hands, or any thing elſe that cometh from* without, *can make a man morally* unclean; but only the wicked diſpoſitions that are *within* the heart of the *man himſelf:* So on the contrary alſo, no rites or ceremonies, nor any thing elſe that is *without* the man, can make him truly *holy and religious*; but that *inward* habitual virtuous Diſpoſition of *mind*, the fruits of which appearing in his Actions, determine the man's true Character and Denomination. Were this *One* Fundamental Truth ſufficiently attended to; Chriſtians could

could not be so absurdly imposed upon, as to make their Religion, whose *Essential* Character is universal Goodness and Charity, become on the contrary *itself* an occasion of Hatred, Quarrels, and Contentions. Which is, by catching at the *Shadow*, to lose the *Substance*; and by contending about the *Means*, to neglect the *End*.

3*dly*, THE same thing appears further from hence, that Moral Duties or the Practice of true Virtue, will continue for ever; but all positive Commandments are but of temporary Obligation. The Love of God and of our Neighbour, are Qualifications which will remain and be perfected in *Heaven*; but all ritual Observances, are appointed only for the assistance and improvement of our Religion here upon *Earth*. When that which is perfect is come, then these subordinate Institutions are to be done away; And not these only, but even those *Virtues* themselves also, which are of a secondary rank, and whose excellency does not ultimately terminate in themselves. Hope, and Faith itself, and all other Graces and Gifts of the Spirit, which are in order to these, must at the consummation of things, necessarily and of course cease: *Whether there be Prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away: But Charity only, never faileth:* Our Love of *God*, will be as much *more* perfect in heaven than it is here; as our knowledge of him will then be increased, *when we shall see him as he is:* And our Love of our *Neighbour* will then be as much improved beyond what it can now arrive to, as the nature of Angels is at present more excellent than that of frail men.

SERMON IX.

Of the Difficulty of arriving at Truth.

St JOHN iv. 11.

The Woman ſaith unto him; Sir, Thou haſt nothing to draw with; and the Well is deep; From whence then haſt thou that living Water.

THE former part of this Chapter contains a very remarkable Hiſtory of our Saviour's Converſation with a Woman of *Samaria*. The *accidental occaſion* whereof, as to humane appearance, was, his retiring out of *Judæa*, to avoid the hatred of the *Phariſees*; leaſt they ſhould apprehend and kill him before his appointed Time: But in reality, the *gracious Intention* of Providence in diſpoſing That ſeemingly accidental Occaſion, was, that the Goſpel might be preached to the *Samaritans* alſo, as well as to the *Jews*. And as, upon *other occaſions*, our Saviour uſually introduced his Doctrine under the veil of a Parable, that he might open it

by degrees as men were able and disposed to apprehend it, and not surprize them with more Light at once than they were able to bear; so *here likewise* he took occasion from things that seemed to offer themselves in common Discourse, to instruct first the Woman, and afterwards a whole City, in the great Doctrines of the Gospel. For, in his passage out of *Judæa* through the Country of *Samaria*, sitting, as it were by chance, and being weary with his journey, on the side of a Well, (near the City of *Sichar*,) called *Jacob's-well*, because supposed to have been anciently digged by that Patriarch; he desires a Woman, who came out of the City to draw Water, that she would give him to drink, ver. 7. The Woman, perceiving *Jesus* by his Speech and Garb to be a *Jew* and not a *Samaritan*; and knowing that the *Jews* and *Samaritans* were at such irreconcileable Enmity against each other, upon account of their Differences in religion, that they had no Communication nor Converse one with another; she seemed surprized with Wonder, and said; *How is it, that Thou being a Jew, askest drink of Me, who am a Woman of Samaria?* ver 9. *Jesus* replied; *If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of Him, and he would have given thee living Water*, ver. 10. Meaning, by an easy similitude taken from the Occasion of their discoursing together, that he would have taught her the *Doctrine of Salvation* contained in the Gospel; which is more truly refreshing to a Mind well-disposed and desirous of Instruction, than Water to a dry and thirsty Body. The Woman, not understanding the Metaphor, but imagining that *Jesus* spake of real Water, answers in the words of

the

the Text, ver. 11. *Sir, Thou haſt nothing to draw with, and the Well is deep; From whence then haſt thou That living Water? Jeſus*, opening and explaining the Figure to her by degrees, replies, ver. 13. *Whoſoever drinketh of* this *Water*, (the natural Water of the Well, to quench his bodily Thriſt,) *ſhall thirſt again; But whoſoever drinketh of the Water that I ſhall give him, ſhall never thirſt; but the Water that I ſhall give him*, the Doctrine of eternal Salvation propoſed in the Goſpel,) *ſhall be in him a Well of Water ſpringing up into everlaſting Life.* And thus having prepared her by degrees, to remove her Prejudices; he then proceeds to tell her ſome of the moſt ſecret Actions of her Life, to convince her of his Power and Knowledge; and, after That, expreſsly owns himſelf to be the Meſſias; and then declares to *her*, and, upon the ſame opportunity, to the *whole City*, that not the *Samaritan*, but the *Jewiſh* worſhip, was, at that time preſent, the true Religion; but that both the one and the other were ſhortly to be ſuperſeded by the inſtitution of the *Chriſtian*, when *the true Worſhippers*, according to the Doctrine of the Goſpel, *ſhould worſhip the Father*, neither after the way of the *Jewiſh* Ceremonies, nor the *Samaritan*, but *in Spirit and in Truth.*

THE Occaſion and Deſign of the *whole* Hiſtory being thus briefly explained; I return now to that *particular* portion of it, which is contained in the words of the Text: *The Woman ſaith unto him; Sir, thou haſt nothing to draw with; and the Well is deep; From whence then haſt thou that living Water?* The words were ſpoken by the Woman, (being yet ignorant of our Saviour's Intention,) they were ſpoken by *Her* in their *literal* Senſe. But our Saviour in his

Anſwer, immediately applying them to a *figurative* ſignification; and calling his own *Doctrine*, the Doctrine of Truth and of eternal Life, by the Name of *living Water*; will juſtify *Us* likewiſe, in conſidering the words and diſcourſing upon them, according to that figurative Senſe or ſpiritual Interpretation, which our Saviour himſelf was pleaſed to put upon them. Allegorizing of Scripture, and putting figurative Senſes upon plain and literal Expreſſions, according to every man's particular Imagination or Conceit; is indeed a thing of dangerous Conſequence; and has in former Ages, been the occaſion of many vain Diſputes in the Church of God; whilſt men of warm imaginations have, by ſuch a method of interpreting, found Doctrines in Scripture which never were there; and contended earneſtly for their own Fancies, inſtead of that Form of Sound Words which was once delivered unto the Saints: But, where our Saviour himſelf has made the Interpretation, and the Senſe is juſtified by the Deſign of the whole Diſcourſe; there we need not fear leaſt we ſhould miſtake in our Explication, nor ſcruple to follow the guidance of ſuch an unerring Inſtructor. In diſcourſing therefore upon theſe words, *Sir, thou haſt nothing to draw with, and the Well is deep:* I ſhall propoſe the following Conſiderations. 1*ſt*, Whence it comes to paſs, that *Truth*, (for that's what our Saviour in this Diſcourſe calls *living Water: Whence*, I ſay, it comes to paſs, that *Truth)* which ſeems ſo neceſſary for *every man* to know, ſhould yet generally be ſo difficult for *any man* to come at: *The Well is deep, and we have nothing to draw with.* And 2*dly*, By what means *every* ſincere perſon, may yet certainly attain to ſuch a *Degree* of Knowledge, or the Diſcovery

covery of *so much Truth*, as is necessary for his own particular Salvation.

I. *First*; Whence it comes to pass, that *Truth*, which seems so necessary for *every man* to know, should yet generally be so difficult for *any man* to come at: *The Well is deep, and we have nothing to draw with.* It has been an ancient complaint from the beginning of the World, among the Philosophers of all Nations, who have professed to employ themselves in the Study of *Nature*; that *Truth* hath lain buried in so *deep a Pit*, that they have never been able to discover the Bottom of it. And the like Complaints we meet with, even in the *Scripture itself.* In the book of *Job*: *There is*, says he, *a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they fine it; iron is taken out of the Earth, and brass is molten out of the stone:* —— *But where shall* Wisdom *be found, and where is the place of* Understanding? —— *There is a path, which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen; The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it:* —— *But whence cometh* Wisdom, *and where is the place of* Understanding; *seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air?* ch. xxviii. 1, &c. And *Solomon*, whose Largeness of Understanding exceeded all that went before him, and was never equalled by any that came after him, yet even *he* complained, *Eccles.* iii. 11. *No man can find out the work that God maketh, from the beginning to the end.* For, *as thou knowest not the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all*; ch. xi. 5. and

ch. viii.

ch. viii. 16. *When I applied mine heart,* (ſaith he) *to know wiſdom, and to ſee the buſineſs that is done upon the earth; Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the Sun; becauſe though a man labour to ſeek it out, yet ſhall he not find it; yea further, though a* wiſe *man think to know it, yet ſhall he not be able to find it.* But theſe things are ſpoken, of *natural* Knowledge; of the Knowledge of the Works of God in the Frame of Nature; which is that part of Truth, wherein we are leaſt concerned to be accurately inſtructed. In that which concerns us more, and ſeems to be of more importance for us to underſtand; the Works of God in the *moral* World, the Diſpenſations of his Providence towards the Righteous and the Wicked; even in *This* alſo there are Difficulties, which the Wiſeſt of men have very hardly been able to ſurmount. Atheiſtical and profane Spirits, have been willing to give it over, as irreconcileable with the Belief of a Divine Being; and Holy and Pious men themſelves have been perplexed in their own Minds, when they could not find out the Explication. *My feet,* ſays the Pſalmiſt, *were almoſt gone; my treadings had well-nigh ſlipt;* when *I was grieved at the wicked;* and ſaw *the ungodly in ſuch Proſperity; I thought to underſtand this, but it was too hard for me,* Pſ. lxxiii. 2, 15. And the prophet *Jeremy,* ch. xii. ver. 1. *Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked proſper? wherefore are all they happy, that deal very treacherouſly?* And *Solomon* himſelf, *Eccleſ.* iv. 1. *I returned and conſidered all the oppreſſions that are done under the ſun; and behold, the tears of ſuch as*

were

were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of the oppressors there was power, but They had no comforter. But This also is of less importance than that which follows. For even in that very thing, which of all others is of the highest concernment to us, the knowledge of our *Practical Duty itself*, the knowledge of what is incumbent upon *ourselves in particular*, and of Necessity to be done by us; even in *This* likewise there may seem at first sight, (to persons not very considerate) to be no small Confusion; and to persons not very considerate, the *Fountain of Truth* may appear very *deep*, and that *they have nothing to draw with.* For among that vast Variety of *Religions* that are professed in the World, how shall a sincere person of ordinary capacity find *Which* is alone the true one? and if he is satisfied that *Christianity* is the true Religion, yet among Christian Churches damning and anathematizing each other, and among Sects even of *Christians* fastening all Names of Contumely and Reproach upon each other, how shall he know *Which* 'tis his Duty to adhere to? The Church of *Rome* tells him, he must blindly follow *her* Authority; or else he forsakes his only Infallible Guide: All *Other* Sects of Christians tell him, he must follow the *Scripture* only, as the compleat Rule of Faith and Manners; and yet in interpreting the meaning of that Rule, *They* also differ from each other; and Every one assures him he is not in the way of Truth, unless he stedfastly adheres to *Their* Interpretation. The Disputes about Religion are infinite, and yet it is of infinite importance not to be deceived: And *what shall* a sincere person *do to be saved?* This is the ground of Complaint; *The Well is deep*, and we *have nothing to draw with*? And now the

the Question is, (which was the 1*st* thing I proposed;) whence comes it to pass, that *Truth*, which seems so necessary for *every man* to know, should yet generally be so difficult for *any man* to come at? And *first*, There is necessarily in the Nature of *Things themselves* some *Difficulty*, and in *our Understandings* much *natural Imperfection*: Which is a just and continual ground of Humility, and Meekness of Spirit. *Some* things, are intirely above the reach of our Capacities; and *others* not to be attained to, without much labour and study. *Some* things we can at most arrive but at a *probable* Knowledge of; and even *That*, not without such peculiar Advantages, as very few men ever are Masters of. And in those things which are the most *level* to our Understandings, and which in their plain and *general* acceptation are of the greatest importance for us to know, there are yet *at the bottom* some accurate Niceties, some subtle Intricacies of Nature, which limit the *Degree* of our Knowledge, even in those very matters which we know the most; and set bounds to our Search even in those things, whose Nature we seem to apprehend the most thoroughly. In the clearest and most unbounded Prospect, there is a distance beyond which no Eye can reach; and in the inmost Nature even of the plainest and most intelligible parts of all the Works of God, there is a depth into which no finite Sagacity can penetrate. But then these secrets are no *part* of *that* Truth, which 'tis necessary for us to know; and therefore we have no just reason to complain, that they are hid from our imperfect Understandings. There is *some* pains and industry, *some* labour and study, at least some *attention* and serious consideration requisite, to the understanding even of the most obvious and necessary

fary Truths; And this is a just and reasonable Obligation upon every man, according to the degree of his Capacity, to look about him and consider with due *Attention of Mind, which* is the true way to *eternal* Salvation; even in like manner as the Providence of God has wisely and reasonably made *some Labour* of the *Body* necessary, to the preservation and support of this *Temporal* Life. *With* such serious Attention, how mean soever a man's Capacity be, he shall certainly find out (as will presently be made appear more distinctly) *so much* of *Truth*, as is necessary for his own particular Salvation: But, *without* Care and Attention, he must unavoidably continue *Ignorant* even of the most *necessary* Truths; because, in the very *Nature* of Man, our Understandings are necessarily slow and imperfect; and in the *Nature* of Things *themselves*, how plain soever in comparison, yet there is always *some* Degree of *Difficulty* to apprehend them thoroughly. And This is the *first* occasion of *Truth's* being *difficult to be discovered.* But then, how great Care and Attention soever men apply, and how large soever their Capacities be; yet if they amuse themselves in searching out things *above* their Faculties; or if, about things in the main sufficiently intelligible, they presume unnecessarily and where *Practice* is not concerned, to enter into such Intricacies and subtle Speculations, as are *beyond* their Depth; thus also they will run into Error and Uncertainty. And This is a *second* occasion, why Truth becomes difficult to be discovered; namely, mens *perplexing themselves*, by aiming at things *not necessary* to be known, that is, which relate not to Christian *Practice*; or at such *degrees* of Knowledge, as are not possible to be arrived at. Of this, those persons are a great instance, who

who while they have loſt themſelves in the Labyrinth of an imaginary *ſecret* Will of God, have neglected to obey, or perplexed the Obligations of obeying, his *declared* Will and Commands. Which is juſt as if a Mariner in a cloudy night, ſhould neglect his Compaſs, and reſolve to ſail by the Stars which cannot be ſeen. Of the ſame kind were the reaſonings of thoſe *Jewiſh* Doctors, who by their vain Traditions made void the Commandments of God, and taught for Doctrines the Opinions of Men. Under the ſame Denomination fall all thoſe Speculations concerning the *metaphyſical Nature* of the *Liberty* of Man's *Will*, and the like; which, while *Wiſe men* could not explain *wherein* their *Liberty* conſiſted, have made *Fooliſh men* doubt whether they had any *Liberty of acting* at all. The Church of *Rome*, by pretending to explain *philoſophically* that which our Saviour ſpoke *morally*, concerning the *Bread and Wine in the Sacrament* being *his Body and Blood*; perplexed the Truth to ſuch a degree, that at laſt, after many Diſputes, they fixt upon That to be true, which of all other things was the moſt impoſſible to be ſo; and made all intelligent perſons in their Communion, of neceſſity to become Scepticks, and, ſo long as they continue in That Profeſſion, to look upon Truth not only as a thing difficult to come at, and hid as it were in a very deep Abyſs, but in reality not to be found any where at all. The Scholaſtick Writers in the middle and diſputing Ages of the Church, by preſuming to explain metaphyſically, how the *Son and Holy Spirit* of God, derived their Being from the Father; ran ſometimes even into Blaſphemy, againſt him from whom they Both proceeded; inſtead of taking care, by the Sanctification of the *Spirit*, and

through

through the redemption of the *Son*, to reconcile themselves to the *Father* and Supreme Lord of all things. *Lastly*, To mention no more instances upon this Head; the Contentions which have disturbed the World, about *Authority and Power* in making *Doctrines of Faith*, which yet none could ever agree in whom it ought to be placed; have frequently so far perplexed even those who know and profess the plain *Doctrine of Christ*, which he himself has expressly declared necessary, *to be the only Rule*; that they have hardly trusted themselves to act upon the Security, of so plain and evident and necessary a Truth. This therefore is the *second* Occasion of Truth's being difficult to discover; namely, mens perplexing themselves perpetually, by aiming at things needless and not necessary to be known. A *third* occasion is, *Prejudice and Prepossession*; arising from the Custom of *Education*, and from mens depending on the *Opinion* and *Authority of particular persons*, without Examination. For 'tis very natural, for men to be fond of such Opinions, as they have been long accustomed to without contradiction; and which are maintained by such persons, for whom they have long been taught to have a great Veneration and Esteem. Hence in Popish and other Countries, wherever any Error has generally prevailed; however *contrary*, and however *apparently* contrary, both to Reason and Scripture the Error be; yet the greater Number of Men, always steadily adhere to it; And 'tis very difficult, even for *reasonable* and *considerate* persons, so far to shake off these Prejudices, as to come to *inquire* and so much as *doubt* concerning an Error, which, if they had not been so prejudiced beforehand, they would hardly have been perswaded

that any man could ever be so absurd as to have entertained at all. This is plainly the Case of *Transubstantiation*, and of all other the like unreasonable Doctrines. *Fourthly* and *lastly*; The last reason of Truth's being difficult to discover, is the *Wickedness* and *Perversness* of Men; who, for their own Interest and Worldly Ends, do sometimes on purpose endeavour to conceal it. Atheistical and profane men, have always made it their business to confound the World with Darkness and Sophistry; to cast mists before the eyes of the Simple, and Stumbling-blocks before the feet of the Unwary. And even among Christians themselves, there have in all Ages been *perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the Truth, supposing that Gain is Godliness:* 1 Tim. vi. 5. There have never wanted men, who for the support of known Errors, and for temporal Advantages, have discouraged all Learning and sober Inquiry after Truth, all study and diligent search into the Grounds and Reasons of things. Nay the whole Protestant World knows *who* have openly carried this matter so far, as to corrupt and falsify Histories, to forge some Books, and destroy and suppress others, to take away (as much as in them lay) the Key of Knowledge, and expressly to forbid the Reading even of the Scripture itself.

THESE are the several Ways, by which Errors are promoted and spread in the World, and from whence it comes to pass (which was the *first* thing to be explained,) that *Truth*, which seems so necessary for *every man* to know, should yet generally be so difficult for *any man* to arrive at. It remains that I proceed now in the

II. *Second*

II. *Second* place to ſhow, by *what means* every ſerious and ſincere perſon, may yet certainly attain to ſuch a *Degree* of Knowledge, or the Diſcovery of *ſo much Truth*, as is neceſſary for his own particular Salvation.. This is the Inquiry, of the greateſt Importance in the World: And the Anſwer to it, may in good meaſure be gathered, from what has been before ſaid. For as Truth is contrary to Error; ſo the Ways alſo by which they are propagated, are contrary to each other: And he that knows by what Means *Error* prevails in the World, is by the ſame directed in general to the beſt Method of finding out the *Truth*. But to be more particular: Becauſe this is a Matter, that concerns Perſons of all Capacities; and Men of the loweſt Abilities are equally under Obligation to find out the Way of Life, as the Learnedeſt Diſputers in the World; from whence 'tis evident, that the Method of finding out ſo much Truth as is neceſſary for every particular man's Salvation, cannot be a Matter of ſubtle Speculation, but of Integrity and ſincere Inquiry; I ſhall therefore propoſe what I think needful upon This Head, in three very plain and intelligible particulars. And 1*ſt*, He that ſincerely and ſeriouſly deſires to diſcover ſo much Truth as is neceſſary to his Salvation, muſt above all things take care, that he in the firſt place reſolve to *do* the Will of God; and then he has a promiſe, that he *ſhall know* of the Doctrine, whether it be of God. The greateſt impediment to the Diſcovery of Truth in matters of Religion, is a *vicious diſpoſition*; which makes men hate to come forth into the Light, leſt their deeds ſhould be reproved. For, what St. *Paul* ſays of the *natural* man, holds true of the *vicious* perſon much more; that he *receiveth*

not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. If a man deals sincerely with himself and suffers not himself to be blinded with the Love of any Wickedness, there is something in the Frame of the Mind of Man, and something in the Nature of Truth itself, which makes them agreeable and connatural to each other, as Objects are suited to their proper Organs; even as the Eye is fitted to distinguish Colours, or the Ear to judge of Sounds. Besides which; such a person is secured moreover by the Promise of God, that he shall by the guidance and Direction of the divine Spirit, be led into all necessary truth: that the *Secret of the Lord* shall be *with them that fear him, and that he* will *shew* them *his Covenant.* Ps. xxv. 14. Which is the Foundation of that excellent Advice of the Son of *Sirach*, Eccl. i. 26. *If thou desire Wisdom, keep the Commandments, and the Lord shall give her unto thee; For the Fear of the Lord is Wisdom and Instruction, and Faith and Meekness are his delight.* This is the *first* and principal Qualification, requisite to the Discovery of truth in matters of Religion. The *second* is, that a man firmly resolve with himself, never to be deluded into the Perswasion of any thing, *contrary* to plain and evident *Reason*, which is the Truth of God's *Creation*; contrary to the known *Attributes* of *God*, which are the Truth of the *Divine Nature*; or contrary to the *moral and eternal Differences of Good and Evil*, which are the Truth and Foundation of all *Religion in general*, and are in *Scripture* constantly represented as such. Had men but kept steadily to this natural and plain Rule, this *Candle of the Lord* (as the Wise man

man ſtiles it,) which God has implanted in their very nature; men, even of the meaneſt capacities, could never have been impoſed upon with the belief of *impoſſible* and abſurd Doctrines, ſuch as is *Tranſubſtantiation*; or with *contradictory* and unintelligible Explications of *true* Doctrines, ſuch as are moſt of the Schoolmens ſubtle and empty Speculations; Becauſe theſe are plainly contrary to the Truth of God's *Creation*, and conſequently cannot poſſibly be of Divine *Revelation*; for, *no Lie is of the Truth*; 1 Joh. ii. 21. Neither could they ever have been perſwaded to believe, that God *abſolutely and unconditionally*, without any regard to their Works, decreed from the beginning the greateſt part of Mankind to *everlaſting Torments*; which is contrary to the *primary Attributes* of God, and to the *Truth* of the *Divine Nature*. Neither could it ever have entered into the Heart of Man to conceive, that *Cruelty and Inhumanity* ſhould have been *doing God good Service*; or that *Perſecution* ſhould have been ſet up in *his* Name and for *his* ſake, who came into the World *not to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave them*; who himſelf always *went about, doing good* only; and the very *End* and the *greateſt* of whoſe Commandments, is *Charity*; that is, Univerſal Love and Good-will towards Mankind. Nor could it ever have been imagined, that *Any Wickedneſs whatſoever*, ſhould have been made part of *Any Religion*; when all ſuch things are directly contrary to the moral and eternal Differences of *Good and Evil*; which are the very *Ground and Foundation* of *All Religion in general*, and as unchangeable as the Nature of God himſelf.

THERE are indeed in the *Old Teſtament* ſome inſtances of the Actions of great and good Men, which to weak perſons may ſeem contrary to this Rule; But 'tis for want of ſufficient Care and Attention, to the particular Circumſtances of the Hiſtory. *David*, the Man after God's own Heart, was indeed guilty of ſome Actions which are very far from being juſtifiable; But then thoſe Actions are expreſsly excepted, as being not *Parts*, but *Blots* in that Character. *Jacob* is repreſented as gaining the Bleſſing by an *Untruth*; But neither is that *Untruth* juſtified in the Hiſtory; neither was it in reality altogether an *Untruth*, becauſe he had before actually bought that Birth-right, to which was annexed the Bleſſing he then claimed; and at the buying the Birth-right, though that Circumſtance is not indeed mentioned in the Hiſtory of *Geneſis*, yet it appears from what the Apoſtle aſſures us, *Heb.* xii. 16. that it was not a *real* but a *pretended* neceſſity, and merely the *profaneneſs* of *Eſau*, that made him ſell and *deſpiſe* it. *Abraham*'s offering his Son, ſeems contrary at firſt ſight to the eternal Law of Nature; But he is juſtified by the *immediate* Command of God, who has undeniably a ſupreme Right over all: A *Right*, not to make Virtue to be Vice, and Vice Virtue; but a *Right* over the *Life* of every man whom he has created: A *Right*, not to make it excuſable in *Abraham* to *hate* his Son; but to make it commendable in him to be willing to part with the Son of *his Love*. In receiving which Command, the Patriarch could not be deceived, becauſe he had been long accuſtomed to the *Manner* wherein God had been pleaſed to reveal himſelf to him; And he had moreover this peculiar ſecurity, that he was ſure his

own

own Heart was perfectly right; in which case he might depend God would not permit him to be inevitably deceived; the Thing that was to be done, being no gratification of any Lust or Cruelty, or any evil Inclination whatsoever, which is always the subject-matter of Temptations from the Evil One. The *Jews* at their coming out of *Egypt*, are represented as *borrowing* jewels of the *Egyptians*, without intention to *repay* them: And this is usually excused by *God*'s expressly commanding them so to do; who, without all question, has a right to take from one and give to another, as he pleases: But (I think) the truer Answer is, that the Word in the Original does not signify to *borrow*, but to *demand*; and that, having now the Power in their hands, they refused to depart without being paid for that Work, which the *Egyptians* had hitherto unjustly compelled them to perform without Wages. But to draw to a Conclusion.

3*dly* and *lastly*; THE next, and the infallible means of finding the Truth in all matters relating to Religion, is, that to sincere intention and virtuous practice, men add *diligent Study of the Holy Scripture*, as the only authoritative Guide in matters of positive *Revelation*. Whosoever he be, of how large, or of how mean capacity soever, that so studies the Scripture, as to resolve that he will *obey* all the plain *precepts* of Christ and his Apostles therein contained, and *believe* all the plain *doctrines* he clearly understands, and *not be contentious or uncharitable* about those he does *not* understand, but apply himself to such persons as he thinks most able to inform him better, not so as to depend implicitly upon *any man's Authority upon Earth* in a matter of Faith, but

but ſo as by *their* aſſiſtance to enlighten and inlarge *his own* Underſtanding of the Scriptures; This man has found an infallible Guide, that will either certainly lead him in the way of Truth, or at leaſt ſecure him from all ſuch *pernicious* Errors, as might endanger his Salvation. This man has diſcovered the *Fountain* of living Water; and has wherewith to draw, how *deep* ſoever it be. In a word: Notwithſtanding all the Darkneſs and Confuſion, all the Intricacy and Diſputes, which the Ignorance and Folly, the Perverſeneſs and Wickedneſs of Men, have introduced in the World; yet by this method, a ſincere perſon may certainly avoid all the *corrupt Doctrines*, brought in by thoſe who careleſsly follow *humane Guides*; and all the *needleſs Diviſions*, kept up among thoſe who pretend to follow only the *Word of God*: And as many as endeavour to walk according to This Rule, Peace will be on them, and Mercy, and upon the *Iſrael* of God.

SERMON

SERMON X.

Of the Nature of religious Faith.

JOHN XX. 29. *latter part.*

Bleſſed are They that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.

TIS the Method of Scripture in *general*, and of our Lord in his Diſcourſes in *particular*, to take all Occaſions of ſetting before men the Happineſs both of Virtue *abſolutely*, and of every degree of improvement in it *comparatively*. How much more valuable, *in general*, the *Love of Truth* and the *Practice of Virtue* is, than *any external* Circumſtances or Advantages whatſoever; our Saviour expreſſes in a very affectionate manner; when, upon occaſion of a certain woman crying out, *Bleſſed is the Womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou haſt ſucked*; he thus declares himſelf, *Luke* xi. 28. *Yea rather, bleſſed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.* How much *every degree* in *particular*, of improvement in virtuous Practice, either by more extenſive Habits of Goodneſs, or by overcoming greater or more numerous Temptations, or by doing what is Right with Fewer Helps and under greater Diſ-

advantages,

advantages, *does comparatively* increase the Blessedness of being Righteous; is set forth to us distinctly in such Passages of Scripture, as these which follow. *They that be wise, shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament; and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever:* Dan. xii. 3. *There is one glory of the Sun, and another glory of the Moon, and another glory of the Stars; for one Star differeth from another Star in glory: So also is the resurrection of the Dead:* 1 Cor. xv. 41. *In a great House there are —— Vessels of Gold and of Silver,* and *also of Wood and of Earth:* 2 Tim. ii. 20. *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake: Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for Great is your Reward in Heaven.* Matt. v. 11. And in the words of my Text: Where our Lord having overcome St. *Thomas*'s incredulity by a singular condescension in permitting him to feel and handle his Body after his Resurrection, and having thereby extorted from him a Confession of his being thoroughly convinced; reproves him afterwards, with this gentle Admonition; *Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

THE Words are plainly *comparative*, expressing the *greater Blessedness* of those who with *less Light* find the way of *Truth*, and with *fewer Helps and Assistances* do what is *Right*. Yet 'tis very evident, this is to be understood *only* of those, who in all *other respects* are in *like* Circumstances, and of whom are required the *like* Instances of Duty. For, not *All* who *have not seen and yet have believed*, have *in the Whole* the Advantage over them who believed

upon

upon the Evidence of *Sight*; but *so far* only as their Circumstances are in all *other respects* equal, *so far* is the Blessedness greater of those who have believed *without seeing*. St *Thomas* was one of those *Twelve*, to whom our Lord promised That high Prehemi-nence, *Matt.* xix. 28; *When the Son of Man shall sit in the Throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Israel.* And *All* the Apostles, to whom this *singular* Promise of *Glory* was made; were of Those who, *because* they *had seen*, had *believed*. 1 Joh. i. 1. *That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our Hands have handled of the Word of Life*; this *declare we unto you*. The Want of this *Evidence of Sense*, which the Apostles enjoyed; most certainly our Saviour in my Text did not mean to affirm, that it should give *every Believer* in the *latter* Ages of the World, a Title to a *greater* degree of Happiness in the life to come, than the *Apostles* themselves. But *so far forth*, as all *other* Circumstances are equal; *so far only* is it *more* advantageous, to have believed *without seeing*. The Apostles were intrusted with a High and Excellent Office, endued with singular and extra-ordinary Talents, charged with a very Great and Laborious Duty, exposed to Dangers and Sufferings above all men. Christians in the *latter* Ages of the World, may very possibly have *some particular* Grounds of Blessedness, which the Apostles had not: And yet it will not at all from thence follow, that they are therefore *in the Whole* more Blessed than the Apostles. The Virtue of a *Man*, may in some *particular respects*, or in some *single Points of View*, (as being in a State of greater ignorance, and more

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Temptations,) be *more* valuable than the Virtue of an *Angel*; and yet it will by no means from thence follow, that men *are*, or that they *ought to be*, more Bleſſed than Angels. The Virtue of a *Penitent*, may in ſome *particular Reſpects* be *more* commendable than That of one who *never offended*; and yet it will by no means from thence follow, that Penitents *are*, or that they *ought* to be, more Bleſſed than thoſe who need no Repentance. God intruſts all his Servants with what Talents he pleaſes, and places them in different Stations, and * *deals to every man* --- *Gifts differing according to* his own good pleaſure. In the Church, he has given † *ſome, Apoſtles*; *and Some, Prophets*; *and Some, Evangeliſts*; *and Some, Paſtors and Teachers.* Of Theſe, St *Paul* affirms, that they are *Labourers together with God*: 1 Cor. iii. 9: And of *All* Chriſtians in general, that they *are God's Huſbandry*, that they *are God's Building.* That in This Building, one ‡ *layeth the Foundation, and another buildeth thereon.* That in This Vineyard, one § *planteth*, and another *watereth*: And that ‖ *every man ſhall receive his Own Reward, according to his Own Labour.* All, are not *Apoſtles*: All, have not the ſame *Gifts*: All, are not called to the ſame *Obligations*, or to the ſame *Poſſibilities.* As, in the natural Body, *all members have not the ſame Office*, Rom. xii. 4: So in the *ſpiritual* Body of Chriſt, God who *does what he pleaſes with his own*, appoints to every man his proper *Duty* or *Truſt*; ver. 3. The words in *Our* Tranſlation are here very *abſurdly* rendred; *God hath*

* Rom. xii. 3. 6. † Eph. iv. 11. ‡ ver. 10. § ver. 6. ‖ ver. 8.

deals

dealt to every man the measure of Faith: But the Sense of the Apostle is, *God has dealt to every man his proper* Trust, a Trust committed to his *Fidelity* or *Faithfulness.* What every man's *Trust*, what every man's *Ability*, what every man's *Station* shall be; is the Appointment of *God.* But *in That* Station, *whatsoever* it be; so much the *more* acceptable shall his Fidelity be, as he has done his Duty under *greater Disadvantages* or with *fewer Helps.* What our Lord declares in the case of *Punishment*, that the Servant which knew his Master's Will, and did it not, shall be beaten with *Many* Stripes; is no less equitable in the case of *Reward*; that he who, under *any* Circumstances of *Disadvantage*, does what is *good* and *right*; shall, (not indeed *absolutely*, but) in *his proportion* and *Station*, whatsoever it be, whether great or small, be intitled to a *greater* degree of Recompence. *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

HAVING thus explained *in general* the *Sense* of the *Words*, and the *Ground* of the *Doctrine* contained in the Text; I shall now proceed more *distinctly and particularly* to the Observation of certain remarkable and important Truths, either *necessarily supposed in*, or *clearly deduced from*, this Assertion of our Lord. And,

First; WHAT our Lord here asserts, clearly supposes, that in the Nature of things, (contrary to what *Enthusiasts* have frequently imagined,) *Faith* or *Belief* cannot but be *less strong* in degree of Evidence, than either the *Testimony of Sense*, or *Proof by Demonstration.* Enthusiasts of all kinds have been very apt to imagine, that by magnifying the certainty and assurance of *Faith*, even *above* the Evidence of

Sense itself, and *equal* to that of *Demonstration*; they could greatly promote the Glory of God, and the Honour of Religion: Not considering, that in reality on the contrary, by subverting the Nature of Things, they subverted the Foundation of That very Faith, which they fancied they were establishing. For *Faith* or *Belief*, in the nature of the thing, necessarily supposes that there is some *Reason for* believing; Otherwise 'tis not *Faith*, but groundless *Delusion*. And this *Ground* or *Reason* of Belief, whatsoever it be, cannot possibly but be always Somewhat, which we already *know* either by the use of our *Senses*, or by *necessary and demonstrative Certainty*. The Certainty of *Knowledge* therefore, of the things which we *know* by immediate *Intuition*, either of the *Eye* or of the *Mind*; must necessarily be *prior* to the Assurance of *Faith*, and consequently *more strong* in the degree of Evidence; as *every Foundation*, in any case whatsoever, *must* be *of Strength* to support what shall be built upon it. The *Credibility* of things *not seen*, cannot but depend upon the *Certainty* of the things that *are seen*: And *Faith* or *Belief*, in its highest possible degree of *Assurance*, can essentially be nothing more, than a well-grounded expectation of things *Future*, in consequence of what we see already *past*; or a rational Assent to the Reality of things *Absent and Invisible*, in consequence of what we have seen or known to be *Present*. To endeavour to raise the Evidence of Faith *higher* than this, is entirely to destroy it. For, what St *Paul* says concerning *Hope*, Rom. viii. 24. *Hope that is seen, is not Hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with Patience wait for it;* may with equal reason

reaſon be applied to *Faith*. In a man's aſſenting to what he *ſees*, or *knows*; there is nothing of *Faith*, but *Science* only. And therefore when our Saviour, in the words before my Text, ſays; *Becauſe thou haſt Seen me, Thomas, thou haſt believed:* His Meaning was not, that *Thomas believed* what he *Saw*; but that by what he *had Seen*, he was convinced of the Truth of what he had *not ſeen*. The Scripture in *other* Places, always ſpeaks after the *ſame* manner; uniformly and conſiſtently throughout. When St *Paul* ſays, *We walk by Faith, not by Sight*, 2 Cor. v. 7; his Meaning is not, (as ſome Enthuſiaſts have imagined,) that the Evidence of *Faith* is *ſtronger* than that of *Senſe*; but on the contrary, that the Grounds of *Faith*, tho' ſufficient to command a reaſonable man's *Aſſent*, and to determine his *Practice*, yet are not equal to the Evidence of *Senſe*. And when he tells us, that *the things which are ſeen, are temporal; but the things which are not ſeen, are eternal*, 2 Cor. iv. 18; he plainly balances the *greater Importance* of the One, againſt the *ſenſible Certainty* of the Other. For now, ſaith he, * *we know* only *in part, and we prophecy in part; --- Now we ſee through a glaſs darkly*, as [Δι' Ἐσόπτρου] through a *deſcrying-glaſs*, which makes ſome ſmall and imperfect Diſcovery of things at a great diſtance: But hereafter, when Faith ſhall terminate in Knowledge, *Then* we ſhall ſee *face to face*; as in a *looking-glaſs*, [κατοπτριζόμενοι, 2 *Cor.* iii. 18.] which repreſents things diſtinctly in their full and true Dimenſions. To ſpeak *otherwiſe* of Faith, and to repreſent it as of Evidence *Superior* to Senſe or Reaſon; is to open the Door to all the Abſurdities of Tranſubſtantiation, and all other Extravagancies of the

* 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 12.

wildeſt Fancy; inſtead of cauſing Religion to *appear* to be, what it really *is*, the moſt *Reaſonable* as well as the moſt important thing in the World. For

Secondly; THOUGH Faith *has not*; and indeed, in the nature of the thing, *cannot have* the Evidence either of Senſe or Demonſtration; yet our Saviour, in pronouncing thoſe men Bleſſed, who *have not ſeen, and yet have believed*; plainly ſuppoſes, and 'tis evident in itſelf, that Many things are very *reaſonable to be believed*, and cannot without extreme Wilfulneſs and Unreaſonableneſs be rejected, which yet are neither *Objects of Senſe*, nor capable of *Demonſtration*. That many *inviſible* things are *real*, is evident from the continual Effects of Nature, which are all of them produced by *inviſible Powers*; And from thence the *Being of God*, is ſtrictly *demonſtrable*. But they who have *not* capacities to apprehend the *Demonſtration*; have yet ſufficient *Reaſon*, from what they *are able* to obſerve and underſtand, to *be fully perſwaded* of the *Truth* of God's Being, and of his Government of the World. And every Atheiſt, who ridicules *This Faith*, does himſelf at the ſame time *believe*, with the moſt unreaſonable Credulity, things that can neither be *Seen* nor *Underſtood*. The *Judgment to come*, and the *future* permanent State of *Happineſs* or *Miſery*; are things not *capable* of the Evidence of *Senſe*, nor *demonſtrable* in any other way than that of moral Certainty. Yet the *rational evidence* ariſing from the conſideration of the *Perfections of God* and of the *Nature of Men*, confirmed moreover by the credible *Teſtimony* of Revelation; is ſuch, in which every reaſonable man ought to reſt ſatisfied; 'Tis ſuch, as is abundantly ſufficient to juſtify every man's Diſcretion, in parting at any time

time with any Temporal Advantage, for the Hopes of a Happy Immortality; 'Tis such, as is really stronger, than what the wisest and most cautious men constantly go upon, in all the *Temporal* Affairs of Life. Hence the Apostle St *Paul*, (Heb. xi. 1.) defines *Faith* to be, what we render, *The Substance*; but the word in the Original signifies, *The well-grounded confidence* or *assured expectation*, of *things hoped for*; the *Evidence* or *rational perswasion* of the Truth *of things not Seen*. And argues, that though at present *we walk* indeed *by Faith* only, *and not by Sight*, 2 Cor. v. 7; yet we have sufficient ground to be *always confident* (ver. 6.) of the Truth of God's Promises, so as to be able to support our Spirits under all Events, and in every condition of Humane life. The Apostles who *saw* our Lord's *Miracles*, and were *Themselves* indued with *Miraculous Powers*; had indeed a *Superiour Evidence* of the Truth of Christ's Doctrine, than We at This Distance of Time can have; And therefore they were sent forth upon a more *difficult* Duty. But to *Us* at This day, and to *all Christians* at *all times* to the end of the World; the *Character* of the *Persons* of the Apostles, and their *Sufferings* for their Testimony to the Truth of Facts within their own Knowledge, and the *Completion of Prophecies*, and the *Reasonableness and Excellency* of the *Doctrine*, and the *Agreement* and uniform corresponding *Series* of *Historical* Facts; and the *State* of the *Patriarchal*, and of the *Jewish* and *Christian* Church, from the Beginning of the World to This day; does and will give *credibility* to the *Miracles* recorded in the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles. And the absolute *Dec-*

monstrative Certainty both of the *Grounds* and *Obligations* of *Natural* Religion, makes it extremely *reasonable* and *commendable* in men, to have a *Disposition* to receive *That Confirmation and Improvement* of it by *Revelation*, which Christ and his Apostles so clearly taught, separate from the *Follies* and *Corruptions* wherewith it has been confounded in later Ages. *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

Thirdly; THIS therefore is a *Third* Observation I would make upon these Words of our Saviour. Such Belief as I am now speaking of; such in its Nature, and such in its Grounds, as I have now described; because 'tis *reasonable*, therefore 'tis *commendable*: And so much *the more so*, as there are at any time *more Temptations* arising, or *more Arguments* drawn, from *any* thing *except Reason*, in favour of *Unbelief*. A virtuous Disposition of Mind, naturally loving Truth, and desirous to do what is Right; apt to fear God, and to rely upon his Protection both present and future, as Father and Governour of the Universe; sensible of the necessary, the essential and unalterable Difference of Good and Evil, and moved perpetually with the Reasonableness of the Expectation of a Judgment to come: The *more Temptations* it meets with to Infidelity, from such Considerations as These; that the things of another Life are remote in *Place*, and far distant in *Time*; that there is always a Possibility of being *mistaken* in things which are not at all the Objects of Sense; that there are often very great *Present Advantages* to be obtained, by transgressing the Rules which Religion prescribes; and sometimes very great

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Disadvantages necessarily to be suffered, by adhering too strictly to the Obligations of Morality: The *more Temptations*, I say, a virtuous Mind meets with, from *Such* Considerations as *These*, to be shaken in its Faith concerning the great Truths of Religion; *the more* valuable and praise-worthy is its Stability in That Faith. Hence the Scripture so frequently declares, that *Blessed is the Man which endureth Temptation*; Jam. i. 12. Hence the Example of the *Patriarch*'s Faith, is so highly recommended; in that they *saw the Promises* only *afar off*, Heb. xi. 13; and *having here no continuing City, but seeking one to come*, they *endured, as seeing Him who is Invisible*; ch. xiii. 14; xi. 27. Hence St *Peter* exhorts *Christians* to *rejoice* in *manifold Temptations*; *that the Tryal of their Faith being much more precious than of Gold that perishes, tho' it be tried with Fire, may be found unto Praise and Honour and Glory at the Appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom* (says he) *having not Seen, ye love*; *in whom, thought now ye see him not, yet believing ye rejoice with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory.* 1 Pet. i. 7.

Fourthly; THE *Fourth* and *Last* Observation I shall make upon the Words of our Saviour in my Text, is; that though a Disposition to receive and believe the Great Truths of Religion, however relating to things at present *invisible* and *remote from Sense*, is indeed highly commendable; yet to expect at any time, under pretence of Religion, to have things *contrary to Sense or Reason*, entertained and believed; is greatly *absurd* and *impious*. The Reason is, because the *One* is founded in a *virtuous* and

good

good Temper of *Mind*; the *Other* always proceeds either from deep and pitiable *Folly*, or from *tyrannical and unrighteous* Views. *The Simple believeth every word, but the prudent man looketh well to his going*; Prov. xiv. 15. Our Saviour does not say, *Blessed are the credulous:* But *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed:* Blessed are they who believe and willingly embrace things *reasonable*, and act honestly according to That Belief, tho' the things themselves be not at present visible to Mortal Eyes. To believe a *Judgment to come*, such as the Gospel of *Christ* has declared; is infinitely *reasonable*, tho' we yet *See* it *not*. To believe *Transubstantiation*, or any *Other* Absurdity, contrary either to *Sense* or *Reason*; is in the most profane manner to make Religion *ridiculous*, by taking away the very *Foundation* of *All Knowledge* and of *All Belief*, either in matters of Religion or in any thing else. For the Judgment of *Reason* being once set aside, there remains no possible means of judging whether any one thing whatsoever, be more *reasonable* or more *unreasonable* to be believed, than another; or whether, in Any case whatsoever, either Belief or Unbelief be in any degree *reasonable* or *unreasonable* at all. The Excellency of *Abraham*'s Faith, consisted in This, that *against Hope he believed in Hope*; Rom. iv. 18. But the *Ground* of this Faith, was; that his own *Senses* assured him, of the reality of God's *Promise*; and his * *Reason* assured him, (so the Apostle expresses it, *Heb.* xi. 19.) that the thing promised was *possible in itself*, though beyond the Bounds of all *natural* Hope. Had the *Object* of his Faith been either

* Λογισάμενος.

contrary

contrary to *Sense*, or *contradictory* in *Reason*; the Motives for his *not believing*, had been stronger than for his *believing*; and his *Faith* had been a *Credulity* founded upon *Nothing*. Whoever carefully considers this, will never imagine that the words of our Saviour in my Text, give Any Encouragement either to the Impositions of Popish Tyranny, or to the Extravagancies of Enthusiastick Folly,

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SERMON XI.

In what the Kingdom of GOD consists.

ROMANS xiv. 17.

For the Kingdom of God, is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

THE greatest part of Christians in the *Apostle*'s days, having been educated originally in the *Jewish* Religion, and but newly converted from it; 'tis not to be wondered at, that whilst *Some* of them rightly understood the Nature and Excellency of the *Gospel*, *Others* of them, who were of weaker Judgments and less clear Understandings, retained, for a long time after their Conversion, many of their antient *Prejudices* and *Scruples* of mind, concerning distinctions of *Days* and differences of *Meats*, which they had been taught to look upon, not (according to the true intention of the Law) as being *typically* and *figuratively* under the then present dispensation, but as being *really* and *intrinsically*, *morally* and *perpetually*, *clean* or *unclean*. Ver. 2. *One man* (says he)

he) *believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs:* —— * *One man esteemeth one day above another, Another esteemeth every day alike.* The *Method* the Apostle takes in this case, to prevent any Inconveniencies arising in the Church, from this diversity of mens apprehensions concerning indifferent things; is by perswading them, that one of the Great Ends and Designs of true Religion, is the promoting among men universal peace and good-will towards each other; ver. 19. *Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another:* And that the only way to obtain this most desirable peace, is to forbear censuring each other upon account of things not in their own nature vicious or immoral: Ver. 3. *Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth:* —— *Let every man be fully perswaded in his own mind: He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it: He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.* And ver. 13. *Let us not therefore judge one another;* --- *but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way: I know, and am perswaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to Him it is unclean.* And then he adds in the words of the Text, as an *argument* or *reason* for their thus bearing with each other, drawn from the *nature* and *essence* of true Religion; *The Kingdom of God* (says he) *is*

Verse 5.

not

not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

IN the following Discourse upon which words, I shall 1*st* explain distinctly the several phrases made use of in the Text: And *then* I shall proceed to draw some useful *Observations* and *Inferences* therefrom.

I. *First*; THIS phrase, *The Kingdom of God*, in its *original*, *literal*, and *proper* sense, signifies God's Supreme *Dominion* over the Universe; The whole course of *Nature*, in Heaven and in Earth, being merely the Effect of his Will and Pleasure; for *All things Serve Him.* But because the *principal* and most *valuable* part of Government, consists in the Subjection and *willing* Obedience of *rational and moral* Agents; hence, in Scripture, *the Kingdom of God* generally signifies That *State* or *Establishment of true Religion or Righteousness* in the World, which *would* have been fixed and settled in the State of *Innocence*; but which, *by Sin and Disobedience*, was removed from among men; and which, by *Repentance* and *Amendment*, is again in some degree *restored* upon *Earth*; and will be *perfectly* and *for ever* established in *Heaven.* And because the principal *Means*, by which This recovery of sinful Creatures is accomplished, is the *Gospel of Christ*; therefore the *State of the* Gospel, the Spreading of the *Profession of true Religion*, and, above all, the *real efficacy and influence of it upon the Hearts and Lives of Men*, is by our Saviour and his Apostles frequently stiled *The Kingdom of God.* Thus when our Saviour first began to preach Repentance, * *The Kingdom of Heaven* (says he) *is at hand:* And when he confirmed his Doctrine with miraculous works, † *then the Kingdom of God*, (says he) *is come*

* Matt. iv. 17. † Matt. xii. 28.

unto you. When the *Pharisees,* sollicitous, not for the promoting of *Virtue* and *true Righteousness,* but for the obtaining of *temporal power and grandeur, demanded of him when the Kingdom of God should come*; his Answer was, * *It cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, lo here, or lo there; for, behold, the Kingdom of God is* within *you:* And in like manner the *Kingdom of* Satan, is not an *external* sensible Dominion, but the power of *Wickedness* and *Immorality* reigning in the *Hearts* and *Lives* of men. When our Lord bids his Disciples to † *seek* in the *first* place *the Kingdom of God,* he explains his meaning by adding in the next words, *and* His righteousness: And tells them, that § *whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child,* (whosoever shall not receive the doctrine of the Gospel with Humility and Sincerity, with Simplicity and Probity of Mind,) *he shall not enter therein*; that is, he shall not be acknowledged as a Disciple of Christ at all. And they who *do receive* it for a *time,* but *continue not* to live worthy of the Religion they profess; this ‡ *Kingdom of God* (he threatens) *shall be taken from them, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.* And if it be not *taken from* them, yet, at the End, ‖ *the Son of man* (says he) *shall send forth his Angels, and they shall gather out of his Kingdom* (out from among the Professors of *His* Religion) *All that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of Teeth.*

Now according to the analogy of *this figure* of speaking, so often used by our Saviour, wherein he

* Luke xvii. 21. † Matt. vi. 33. § Mark x. 15.
‡ Matt. xxi. 43. ‖ Matt. xiii. 41.

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stiles the establishment of his true religion the *Kingdom of God*; the Apostle St *Paul* in like manner in *His* epistles, *The Kingdom of God*, says he, (1 *Cor.* iv. 20,) *is not in word, but in power:* His meaning is; The religion of Christ, does not consist in mere Outward Professions and in Forms of Godliness, but in the efficacy of a true Persuasion upon the minds of men, bringing forth real Virtue and Holiness in their Lives. And in the words of the Text, *The Kingdom of God* (says he) that is, the essence of True Christian religion, *is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

THE phrase, *Meat and drink*, is an allusion to that distinction of Meats, of clean and unclean, and other such like external Observances, on which the *Jews* laid so great a Stress in *Their* religion. *Heb.* ix. 10. *The first tabernacle*, —— says the Apostle, *stood only in Meats and Drinks, and divers Washings, and carnal Ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.* And because they were imposed *only until* the time of reformation, therefore, when the Gospel of Christ was established, these things were no longer to take place. *Col.* ii. 16. *Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath-days; Which are a shadow of things to come, but the Body is of Christ: —— Why then are ye subject to ordinances, —— (which all are to perish with the using,) after the commandments and doctrines of men?* Things of *this* nature, even during the *Jewish* dispensation, were by all reasonable persons understood to be *in their own* nature indifferent, however *commanded* for a time upon *particular* reasons. *Matt.* xv. 17. *Do not ye yet understand*, saith our Saviour, *that whatsoever entreth in at the mouth, goeth*

into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and they defile the man: For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man. St *Paul* in like manner, 1 *Cor.* vi. 13, *Meats* (says he) *for the belly, and the belly for meats; but God shall destroy both It and Them.* And again, ch. viii. ver. 8, *Meat* (says he) *commendeth us not to God*; (The Argument is *universal*, and held good at *all times* and under *all dispensations*, with regard to the *real* and *intrinsick nature* of things: *Meat commendeth us not to God;) for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.* Even, therefore, under the *Jewish* dispensation *itself*, things of this nature, though very strictly commanded, in order to the more compleat separation and legal Holiness of that particular people; yet were not really *perfective of them that did the service, as pertaining to the conscience*; any otherwise than as *types*, having their signification verified by *moral* Purity and Holiness. *Heb.* xiii. 9, *It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with meats, which have not profited* them that have been occupied therein. And if, even to the *Jews themselves*, the case was Thus; *much more* were those *Christians* to blame, whom St *Paul* writes to in this epistle to the *Romans*, and in his first to the *Corinthians*; who, professing a religion not appointed for the separating of *one* particular nation, but in which *all* nations were to agree, yet desired to lay too great *a stress* upon such particular Observances with regard to things in their own nature indifferent,

indifferent, as could have no other tendency than to promote Divisions among Christians, and uncharitableness in their * *judging one another*; Which are the great Hindrances of That Glory of God, which consists in the universal establishment of true Virtue and Righteousness amongst men. Against *these persons* therefore he directs himself, when he so earnestly exhorts, 1 *Cor.* ix. 13, *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* And ch. iv. 20, *The Kingdom of God, is not in* word, *but in* power; not in mere *forms* of Godliness, but in the *effectual practice* of true Virtue. And in the words of the Text; The *Kingdom of God, is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

THE terms, *Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost*, are here put by way of *eminence*, as Parts for the Whole; as being the *principal* Virtues in which true religion consists, or (as our Saviour speaks) *the weightier matters of the Law.* The *reason why* the Apostle, in reckoning up these weightier matters of the Law, does not here mention That *first and great Commandment*, the *Love* or *Worship* of *God*; is because *That* is included in the *Subject* of his Proposition, *The Kingdom of* God. The *Kingdom of God*, that is, the religion of the sincere Worshippers of the True God, consists principally and essentially, not in the observation of mere external Forms, but in the practice of real and true Virtue, of *Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost.* The word, *Righteousness*, comprehends the practice of those *moral* and *eternal* Virtues, *Justice, Equity, Truth, Fidelity, Holiness, Purity*, and the like; the Op-

* Romans xiv. 3.

posites whereof, are *all Injustice* and *Iniquity* towards *Others*, and *all Debaucheries* which men practise among *themselves*. The term, *Peace*, signifies That good Temper, That Charitable Spirit, and kind disposition of mind, by which Those who, with regard to *things in their own nature indifferent*, have *not* exactly the same Sentiments, yet through mutual forbearance and love towards each other, preserve nevertheless the bands of christian unity and concord: For, Peace and Concord among men there can possibly be, only by one or other of the three following ways: Either by the agreement of All, in a perfect and infallible Knowledge of the Truth: Or by a compulsive and hypocritical agreement, in the maintaining of Opinions which they understand not: Or lastly, by an agreement of mutual Charity and Good-will, among All who live in the sincere Inquiry after Truth, and practice of Righteousness. The first of These, is the Unity which is among Angels: The Second is That Unity, which is among profane, atheistical, irreligious, or very superstitious men: The Third, is the *Peace* mentioned in the Text; the Peace and Unity which is among Good and Sincere Christians; *walking in love*, as the same Apostle elsewhere expresses it; and *giving no Offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God*; *Even as I* (says he) *please all men in all things*; *not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved*. *Lastly*; The phrase, *Joy in the Holy Ghost*, signifies That *delight* and *taking pleasure* in *doing good*, which is the highest *perfection* of *Christian virtue*; and That *satisfaction* even in *suffering* at any time (if the Will of God be so) for Righteousness sake, which is the highest *Evidence* of *Christian sincerity*

cerity. Which affection of mind, because it is (at least in remarkable cases) worked in men by the assistance and influence of the divine Spirit, 'tis therefore called in Scripture *Joy of the Holy Ghost,* 1 Th. i. 6. and, in the Text, *Joy in the Holy Ghost*; while at the same time, in other places, 'tis mentioned under the more large and unlimited expressions, of *rejoicing evermore, rejoicing in hope, rejoicing in the Lord*; and, in general, doing all things (*Acts* ii. 46,) *with gladness and singleness of heart.* Nor is there Any inconsistency in thus representing one and the same Christian Virtue, as being both a good disposition of the *mind itself* in the *man* who possesses it, and yet also at the same time an influence of the *spirit* of *God.* For as, in true Philosophy, all *natural* Actions, when pursued, with the most sagacious exactness of Inquiry, through all their series of Second Causes, appear *at last* to the eye of the most exquisite Philosopher, as they do *at first* to the pious judgment of the meanest Christian, to derive originally from God: So in *spiritual* actions, those very Virtues, which, essentially to their being Virtues at all, must be the voluntary operations of a man's own mind; may yet, very consistently, have at the same time the *like* sort of dependence upon the Influences of the divine Spirit, as all our *natural* actions have upon that Concurrence of God, from which our Wills themselves, and all the Faculties of our nature, continually and every moment derive their Power of Acting. And This observation will very clearly account for all those passages of Scripture, wherein the *Virtues* of *Men,* and the *Gifts* of the Spirit of *God,* are promiscuously taken for each other. The *Fruits* or Graces *of the Spirit,* in St *Paul's* Catalogue, are individually the same

ſame as *moral Virtues*: And *Barnabas*'s being a *good man*, and *full of the Holy Ghoſt*, are joined together as expreſſions of the *ſame* import: And what our Saviour in St *Luke*, ch. xi. 13, ſays of our *heavenly Father giving his* Holy Spirit, is, in St *Matthew* * recording the very ſame words, underſtood of *his giving* good things *to them that aſk him*.

II. *Secondly*; AND thus having diſtinctly and at large explained all the *ſeveral* expreſſions in the Text, *The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteouſneſs, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt*; The *Obſervations* I would draw from the Apoſtle's aſſertion in the *whole*, are briefly as follows.

Firſt; THAT the Great and Principal End of true Religion, is the promoting and eſtabliſhing among Men, the Practice of *moral* Goodneſs and Righteouſneſs. *God*, is himſelf eſſentially a Being of infinite Purity and Holineſs; and his *future Kingdom in Heaven*, is of ſuch a nature, that † *there ſhall in no wiſe enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatſoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie*. Conſequently thoſe Virtues which are eſſentially neceſſary to the enjoyment of the Happineſs of Heaven *hereafter*, cannot but be the principal Conſtituents of the Kingdom of God *here*. Which Virtues, *our Saviour* therefore emphatically calls *The* § weightier *matters of the Law*. And the *Apoſtle* accordingly, whenever he mentioned *Theſe* things, always ſuppoſes all *other* matters, to be, *comparatively* ſpeaking, as nothing. ‡ *In Chriſt Jeſus* (ſays he) *neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion, but faith which worketh by love*. For ‖ *Circumciſion*

* Ch. vii. 11. † Rev. 21. 27. § Matt. xxiii. 23.
‡ Gal. v. 6. ‖ 1 Cor. vii. 19.

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is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. * *And as many as walk according to This rule, peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.* † For *These things* (says he) *are good* (are essentially good) *and profitable unto Men :* § And *He that in These things serveth Christ, is acceptable unto God, and approved of* (all reasonable) *men.*

Secondly ; THE *Second* Observation I would draw from the Apostle's doctrine in the Text, is : that tho' the Great and Principal End of true Religion, is the promoting and establishing the Practice of *Moral Virtue and Righteousness* ; yet the *Externals also* of Religion, matters of Order and Decency and Particular Appointment, are nevertheless of necessity not to be neglected. The distinctions of *meats and drinks* alluded to in the Text, tho' they are *not* the *Kingdom of God, not* of the essence *of religion,* yet, under the *Jewish* dispensation, they *were* expressly and immediately of *divine appointment* ; And *so long as* they were appointed, and *for the* Ends *to which* they were appointed, and *in subordination to* those Ends, they *were* of necessity to be *observed.* The weightier matters of the Law, *ought* (as our Saviour expresses it with the most perfect accuracy ; they *ought*) to be *done* ; and the others, *not to be left undone.* ‡ And, *in proportion* ; now, and at all times, under the *Christian* dispensation likewise ; matters of *positive appointment,* of decency and external form, tho' *not* of the *essence* of religion, yet so far as they are *Helps* and *Means* of religion, ought not in any wise to be *left undone.* In

* Gal. vi. 17. † Tit. iii. 8. § Rom. xiv. 18.
‡ Matt. xxiii. 23.

proportion

proportion (I say) This holds true, under the *Gospel* likewise: For

Thirdly; THE *Third* and *Last* Observation I would draw from the words of the Text, is; that *That* Form and Institution of religion is *proportionably* the *most perfect*, which has the *fewest* positive external Rites, and lays the *least stress* upon them; and wherein those Rites which *are* appointed, have the most direct and immediate tendency to promote *real* Virtue and Holiness. This is evident in the *nature* of *things*. For, in *all* cases whatsoever, the *End* is *always* best and most certainly attained, where the *Means* made use of, are *Fewest* in *number*, and most *direct* in their *nature*, and most *obvious* in their *tendency*, and *least apt* to be *perverted*, and have *no* other *stress* laid on them, than just as they promote the End they were design'd for. The *End* therefore, is always principally to be had in View; and *Means* are nothing, but with relation to the *End*. *The Kingdom of God, is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

THE *Inferences* from what has been said, shall be very short, and such as obviously follow from the fore-going Observations.

1st, FROM hence appears the peculiar Excellency and Advantage of the *Christian* religion; that it is not burdened, as the *Jewish* was, with a multitude of outward Rites and Ceremonies; with perpetual Washings, Purifications, Sacrifices, and other typical Observations, which (as the Apostle expresses it) *neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear*; but requires of us, in order to eternal Salvation, only *Faith* in *God* and in *Jesus Christ*, *Repentance* from *dead Works*, and *Obedience* to the *Laws* of Christ in the

the *Gospel*, in expectation of the *Resurrection* to *eternal Judgment*.

2*dly*, FROM what has been said, appears the Great *Wisdom* and *Usefulness* of those *few* even external Rites in the *Christian* institution; the *Preaching of the Word*, and the *Administration* of the *two Sacraments*; These being such *Means*, as have a *direct*, *natural*, and *immediate* Tendency, to promote the *Ends* of *real* Virtue and Holiness. For, by the *Preaching* of the *Word*, men are instructed in the *Knowledge of* their Duty, and continually exhorted to perform it. By *Baptism*, they are admitted into a solemn *Obligation* to *obey* it: And by the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*, they continually *renew* and *confirm* That Obligation. Nevertheless, *excellent* as these *Means* are, both in their *natural* aptness to the End designed, and moreover as being *expressly* and *positively commanded* by *Christ himself*; yet that they are still *but* Means, subordinate *to*, and useful *only as* they promote, the practice of real Godliness, Righteousness, and Charity; is evident from hence; that the *Virtues* which these Institutions were intended to promote, are *absolutely*, *essentially*, *indispensably*, and without *Any* excepted Cases whatsoever, necessary to Salvation; there being no expedient, by which an unrighteous person, continuing such, can *possibly* enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: The *Gospel itself* to such a person, instead of being a *Savour of life unto life*, becomes on the contrary the *Savour of Death unto Death: Baptism*, being merely the *washing away the filth of the flesh*, and not the *answer of a good conscience towards God*, is of no benefit to him; and the receiving the *Lord's Supper*, does but increase his condemnation. But

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now on the other ſide, in matters of *poſitive inſtitution*, tho' by our Lord himſelf, declared *generally* neceſſary to Salvation, yet in *particular* circumſtances there are manifeſtly *Some* excepted Caſes. *Infants* dying ſuddenly *before Baptiſm*, no reaſonable perſon can believe ſhall periſh, for what can in no ſenſe be eſteemed their own Fault. The *Penitent* upon the *Croſs*, tho' he could not be baptized, yet received from our Lord's own Mouth a Promiſe of Salvation. And in the primitive Ages, when Many Converts, before they could be baptized, were carried immediately to *Martyrdom*; no one doubted, but their dying *literally* with and for Chriſt, was more than equivalent to being *figuratively* buried with him by Baptiſm into Death. Which clearly ſhows the *true difference*, between the things which abſolutely *muſt be done*, and the things which *ought not to be left undone*.

3*dly*, FROM what has been ſaid, it appears, how contrary to the Spirit of Chriſtianity the manner of the Church of *Rome* is, in multiplying mere Forms and Ceremonies without number, and particularly in making additional *Sacraments* of their own invention, or pretended means of conveying Grace, in order to amuſe the people, and withdraw their attention from the Practice of real and true Virtue. Thus *Confirmation*, which is only mens publickly ratifying their baptiſmal Vow; and *Ordination*, which is the Solemn Appointment of particular perſons to a particular Office; are, with *Them*, *Sacraments*. Alſo, inſtead of True Repentance and Amendment of Life, they have the *Sacrament* of *Penance*. And upon a groſs miſinterpretation of a ſingle paſſage in St. *James*'s epiſtle, concerning the Sick being anointed

anointed with oil, and having their Sins forgiven, and their bodily Diſeaſe at the ſame time miraculouſly cured; is built the ſuperſtitious *Sacrament* of *extreme Unction.* And becauſe St. *Paul*, in his comparing Matrimony with the ſpiritual Union between Chriſt and his Church, calls That Similitude a great *Myſtery*, which word *Myſtery* the *Latin* tranſlator ignorantly and ridiculouſly renders *a great Sacrament*; hence *Matrimony* is, with *Them*, another *Sacrament.* And innumerable other things of the like nature there are among them, of which St *Paul* would have ſaid, with greater earneſtneſs than even of the *Jewiſh Obſervations* themſelves; *The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt.*

SERMON XII.

The Parable of the Rich Man and *Lazarus* explained.

LUKE xvi. 25.

But Abraham said: Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now He is comforted, and thou art tormented.

OUR Saviour in the *Beginning* of this chapter, shows by the Parable of the Unjust Steward, *what* is the true and wise Use of Riches, ver. 9. *I say unto you, Make to yourselves Friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you,* (it ought to have been rendred, *ye may be received,) into everlasting Habitations.* By the *mammon of unrighteousness,* is not here meant *Riches unjustly gotten,* but *Riches* in general; the *false,* the *uncertain,* the *transitory* Riches of this present World: As appears plainly from the use of the same word in other places, and particularly from the following part of This very Parable, ver. 11; where *unrighteous* is expressly opposed, not to *righteous* or *just,* but to *True* or *Permanent: If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous*

teous mammon; that is, in the Use of the *uncertain and transitory Riches* of this *present* Life, *Who will commit to your Trust the True Riches*, the *permanent* and *unchangeable* Riches of *Eternity?* The Sense therefore of our Lord's Exhortation, is: Employ in such a manner, in the ways of Justice, Equity, Sobriety and Charity, these *false*, *uncertain* and *transitory* Riches *here*; that *hereafter* ye may be found worthy to be intrusted with an *unchangeable and everlasting* Possession.

HAVING thus declared what was the *True and Wise Use* of Riches, our Saviour proceeds in the *latter part* of this Chapter, (by way of Reproof to the *Pharisees* who *were covetous and derided him*, ver. 14; he proceeds) to show, by the Parable of the *Rich Man* and *Lazarus*, that Those who had great Superiority and exalted themselves highly in the *present World*, were not always of Esteem in the Sight of God, or in the way of being Happy in the *World to come*. *There was* (says he) *a certain Rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linnen, and fared sumptuously every day*. This *rich man died, and was buried*: And *in hell, lifting up his Eyes in Torments, and seeing Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his Bosom*; he begged of him to *send Lazarus, that he might dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool* his *Tongue*; *for* he was *tormented in* That *flame*. The Answer our Lord puts in the Mouth of the Patriarch, is, in the words of my Text: *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: But now He is comforted, and Thou art tormented.*

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THE Firſt thing that obviouſly offers itſelf in theſe words, as worthy of particular Obſervation, is; that our Lord here repreſents a perſon tormented in the Flames of Hell; and, when his petition for mercy is rejected, there are *not* expreſsly charged upon him any Great and Enormous *Vices*; but, *what* his peculiar Crimes were, is left to be *collected only* from the Circumſtances of the whole Parable compared together; and he is here barely put in mind, that he had already *in his Life-time received* his *Good things*, as *Lazarus* had received *Evil things*. It was very natural to have expected, that the Patriarch ſhould here have *expreſsly* charged him with *revelling* and *drunkenneſs*, with *waſting his Subſtance in riotous living*, as the *Prodigal* in the fore-going chapter is deſcribed to have done. Or he might have been charged *plainly and explicitly*, with *Cruelty* and *Uncharitableneſs* towards the Poor. He might have been told *diſtinctly* and with many *aggravating* circumſtances, that ſince, when he lived in eaſe and plenty and in the abundant enjoyment of all the good things of life, he had ſhown no regard to the miſerable State of the *Poor* man; he had no reaſon to expect, now that the Scale was turned, and Himſelf fallen into a State of Miſery, that the *Poor* man ſhould leave That place of Happineſs which is figured to us by *Abraham*'s Boſom, to come and quench the Violence of the Flame that tormented *Him*. He might have been told, that 'twas but juſt, ſince he had *ſhown* no Mercy, none ſhould *be ſhown* to *Him*; and that he ſhould *receive* no Relief from the *poor man* after Death, to whom he had *given* none when he was Alive. All This, I ſay, it was natural to

have been expected, ſhould have been highly and ſeverely aggravated upon him. But our Lord does *not* introduce the Patriarch *expreſsly charging* him with *Any* of theſe *Vices*. On the contrary, what *Abraham*'s Reply directly *charges* him with, does not obviouſly and at firſt ſight appear to be *Criminal: Son, remember that Thou in thy life-time receivedſt thy good things*. The Character given of him in the introduction of the Parable, is; that he was *clothed in Purple and fine linnen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day*. And as his Quality or Station in the World may be ſuppoſed to have been, there is no Impoſſibility but he might be conceived to have done this, without the imputation of any Scandalous Exceſſes. Differences of Station, there muſt be in the World. 'Tis plainly the Will of God, that there *ſhould* be ſuch; and that they ſhould be ſupported with proper Marks of Diſtinction. Luxury does not conſiſt in the innocent enjoyment of any of the good things, which God has created to be received with Thankfulneſs; but in the waſtful Abuſe of them to vicious Purpoſes, in ways inconſiſtent with Sobriety, Juſtice, or Charity. The exceeding plenty in which *Solomon* is deſcribed to have lived, 1 *Kings* iv. 22. is not laid to his charge as a *Sin*, but remarked as an Inſtance of God's Bleſſing upon him, and of the fulfilling That Promiſe made to him upon his deſiring Wiſdom and an underſtanding Heart, ch. iii. 13. *I have alſo given thee that which thou has not asked, both Riches and Honour, ſo that there ſhall not be Any among the Kings like unto thee all thy days*. And even in the *New Teſtament*, wherein the *Future State* is more clearly revealed; ſtill *Godlineſs* (with

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an exception always to the case of *Persecution,) has the Promise of* This *life* also, as well as of *That which is to come.* And They who *are Rich in This World,* 1 Tim. vi. 17. are not threatned as if they should be *miserable in the Next World,* for *This reason only* because God had blessed them in *This*; but they are *charged, not to be high-minded, nor* trust in *uncertain Riches, but in the Living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: That they do good, that they be Rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good Foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life.*

THIS therefore being the case; that the *Rich man* in this Parable is not, as might have been natural to expect, charged *in plain and express words* with the Practice of any *direct Vice*; and yet it being infinitely certain, that *nothing but Vice* can be the real Cause of any man's *coming into That place of Torment:* What remains, is,

First, THAT we enquire from the whole Scope of our Lord's Discourse, and collect from the several Circumstances of the Parable compared together, *What* the *Vices* were, which Christ here intended to condemn in the person of this Rich man, and to warn his Hearers against. And

Secondly, THAT we consider *What* the *Reason* might be, (For there could not but be *Some* particular *Reason,*) *why* our Lord chose to express himself in this manner; not naming *expressly,* and in *plain words,* any *particular Vice*; but *leaving it to be collected* from the whole Series of the Parable.

I. *First*; WE must collect from the whole Scope of our Lord's Discourse, and from all the Circumstances

ſtances of the Parable compared together, *What* the *Vices* were, which Chriſt here intended to condemn in the perſon of this Rich man, and to warn his Hearers againſt. And

1*ſt*, THAT, *in general*, our Lord intended it ſhould be underſtood, that the perſon he ſets forth under this parabolical repreſentation, was not merely a State of Proſperity, but a really *Vicious* character; appears plainly from the deſcription the rich man is introduced as giving of his *five brethren*, ver. 28. 30. The whole Diſcourſe ſuppoſes them to be perſons of the *ſame* manner of Life with their Rich Brother. And This their manner of Life was, what ſhowed them to have no Regard to the Exhortations of *Moſes and the Prophets*; 'Twas what made it deſirable and neceſſary, in the Rich man's judgment, that one ſhould be ſent on purpoſe *to Teſtify unto them, leaſt they alſo* ſhould *come into That place of Torment*; 'Twas a courſe of Life, which muſt needs bring them to deſtruction, if they did not *repent*; and which, *if one went unto them from the Dead*, (he thought) *they* Would *repent* of, though they would not at preſent *hear Moſes and the Prophets*. This plainly ſhows, that our Lord intended in this Parable to be underſtood to repreſent, not merely a State of Proſperity, but *in general* a really *Vicious* character.

2*dly*, 'TIS probable, *in particular*, that our Saviour intended to give an intimation of the Danger of the Sin of *Uncharitableneſs*, when he repreſents *Lazarus* lying in a very miſerable condition at the Rich man's door, and *deſiring to be fed with the Crumbs that fell from his Table*. For though he does not *expreſsly* put the caſe, that the *Poor man* found

found *no relief* in those circumstances; yet since, on the contrary, 'tis neither expressed in the Historical part of the Parable, nor pleaded by the Rich man in his Own behalf, that there *was* any Relief given; 'tis reasonable to suppose that our Lord intended to be understood, as making *Uncharitableness* a part of the *Character* represented under this Parable.

3*dly*, 'Tis probable, for the same reason, that *Luxurious Rioting and Drunkenness* was likewise *in particular* designed to be reproved in this parabolical representation. For though *This Vice* also does not *expressly* enter into the *Character* here set forth; and all that we read upon *This head* is, that the Rich man was *cloathed in Purple and fine Linnen, and fared sumptuously every day*; yet since, in *This respect* also, neither in the Historical part of the Parable, nor in the Rich man's Plea for Mercy, is there any intimation of any *Guard against* these Excesses, or of any *Good Use* made of his Riches and Grandeur; but, on the contrary, the *Whole* is an express Character of a person *Condemned*, and of one having *no Apology* to make for *Himself*; 'tis reasonable to conclude, that *This Vice* also was by our Lord intended to be understood as Part of the *Character* here represented.

4*thly*, From the particularly remarkable expression in my Text, *Remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy Good things*, compared with the other parts of the Parable; 'tis plain that our Lord's *Principal View* in this whole Discourse, was to warn men of the danger of That *Worldly-mindedness*, of That *Heedlessness* concerning matters of *Religion*, of That total *Intentness* upon *present Pleasure and Profit*, which is not so much itself a *particular Vice*,

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but rather the *Foundation of All Vices.* 'Tis That, which makes men *regardless* of *Futurity*, and not to have *God in All their Thoughts.* 'Tis That *Deceitfulness of Riches*, and the *Care of Other things*, of Ambition and Voluptuousness; which, our Lord tells us in Another Parable, *chokes the Word*, (stifles all Notions of Religion,) *and it becometh unfruitful.* 'Tis That Temper, which exposes a man to *Every Temptation* of *Any kind*; and makes him continually ready to sacrifice the Interest of Truth and Virtue, whenever it happens to come in competition with the *Good Things* of this present Life, the *Good things* on which alone his Heart is entirely set. This *Character* is in a very lively manner set forth by the Psalmist, *Ps.* xlix. 6; *There be some that put their Trust in their Goods, and boast themselves in the multitude of their Riches:* —— *They think that their Houses shall continue for ever, and that their dwelling-places shall endure from one generation to another:* —— *He shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth, neither shall his Pomp follow him:* —— *Man being in Honour has no Understanding, but is compared unto the Beasts that perish.* An eloquent description of the *like persons*, we meet with in the Book of *Job*; ch. xxi. 9; *Their Houses are safe from Fear, neither is the Rod of God upon them:* —— *They take the Timbrel and Harp, and rejoice at the Sound of the Organ: They spend their days in Wealth, and in a moment go down to the Grave: Therefore they say unto God, depart from us, for we desire not the Knowledge of thy ways: What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what Profit should we have, if we pray unto him?* The *same Temper* is again set forth by our Saviour in

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Another Parable, *Luke* xii. 16; *The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plenteously. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no Room where to bestow my Fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my Barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my Fruits and my Goods. And I will say to my Soul; Soul, thou hast much Goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.* 'Tis the perfect character of a person whose *Treasure* was upon Earth, and his *Heart* and Affections placed entirely *There* also: Who look'd not at all upon Riches, Honour, Power, and other worldly Advantages, as *Talents* committed to his Charge, to be employed as Means and Opportunities of Good, of promoting and encouraging Truth, Virtue, Justice, and Charity in the World; (which is what our Saviour calls *being Rich towards God*;) But he esteemed them merely as Instruments of Luxury, Pride, and Vanity: In the midst of which Folly, *God said unto him, Thou Fool, this night shall thy Soul be required of thee; then whose shall all these things be, which thou hast provided?*

5*thly*, THAT our Lord's *View and Design* in the description he gives of the State of the *Rich man* and *Lazarus* after their Deaths, is what I have now represented; may be still further confirmed from the *connexion and cohærence* of his *Whole Discourse*, and from the *Occasion* of his speaking the Parable. The Pharisees and Chief men among the *Jews*, in our Saviour's time, were extremely proud and vainglorious, covetous and ambitious; * *desiring to walk in long robes; loving the highest Seats in the Synagogues, and the chief Rooms at Feasts; making long*

* Luke xx. 46.

Prayers

Prayers for a Shew before Men, and at the ſame time *devouring Widows Houſes.* Concerning theſe perſons, our Lord declares no leſs than three ſeveral times in the *ſixth chapter of St. Matthew,* that in the *Praiſe of Men,* which their Hypocriſy and Worldly Grandeur procured them, *they had their Reward*; but at the hands of God, for their Real Wickedneſs, *the ſame* perſons, ſays he, * *ſhall receive greater Damnation.* To *Theſe mens* corruptions, almoſt *all* our Lord's Diſcourſes, through the Whole Goſpel, have a *perpetual* View. With regard to Theſe *particularly* in *this chapter* whereof *my Text* is a part, our Saviour warns his Diſciples, ver. 13; *No man can ſerve two Maſters: For either he will hate the one, and love the Other; or elſe he will hold to the One, and deſpiſe the Other: Ye cannot ſerve God and Mammon.* Theſe Admonitions, the Evangeliſt obſerves, ver. 14, that *the Phariſees, who were Covetous, heard, and derided him.* Whereupon Jeſus replied to them, ver. 15; *Ye are they which juſtify yourſelves before Men, but God knoweth your Hearts: For That which is highly eſteemed amongſt Men, is abomination in the Sight of God.* And then, as an illuſtration and confirmation of That aſſertion, he *concludes* his Diſcourſe with the *Parable of the Rich man and Lazarus,* ver. 19: Wherein is repreſented in the ſtrongeſt and moſt affectionate manner, how Riches and Power and Grandeur, and all thoſe Advantages for which men are generally ſo highly valued in the *preſent World*; are no Marks at all of *God*'s Final *Favour*: For that, in the *next World* God will judge entirely by Other meaſures, and will have No regard to any thing but to the *Virtues* taught in the *Law and the Prophets*; So that Many

* Ver. 2, 5, 16. † Luke xx. 47.

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of Those who are *First* here, shall There be *Last*, and the *Last* shall be *First*.

II. *Secondly*, HAVING thus at large explained the *Nature* and *Design* of the *Parable*; it remains in the *Second* place, that we consider *What* the *Reason* might be, why our Lord chose in This Parable not to name *expressly* and *in plain words* any *particular Vice*, for which he represents the Rich man condemned; but to *leave it* rather *to be collected*, from the Whole Series of the Parable. And

1*st*, SINCE 'tis plain from the Introduction, ver. 14, 15, that our Lord intended here to reprove the *Covetous* and *Proud Pharisees*; 'tis reasonable to suppose, that he thought proper to express himself after *This manner*, as being more *likely* to *take effect*, and that the Pharisees might the more *readily* apply the Parable to *Themselves*. Had our Lord aggravated the *Particular Vices* of the rich man, whom he here represents as condemned; the Pharisees probably would thereupon in their own Minds have *thanked God, that they were not as Other men are*, guilty of *This* or the *Other* particular Vice, *or even as This rich Man*. But, in the manner our Saviour *Now* worded his description; their Own Hearts, how great soever their Pride was, could not but tell them they were such persons as he describes; and that All their *Grandeur*, and their being *highly esteemed among Men*, was of no advantage before *God* the Judge of Hearts. And this could not but naturally lead them, (such of them as had Any sense of Religion at all,) to consider and collect from the whole Series of the Discourse, *what* were the *Vices* for which the *Rich man* was condemned.

2*dly*, ANOTHER and (I suppose) the Principal Reason, why our Lord chose to express himself in this *general* and *less explicit* manner, without mentioning *in plain and direct words* Any *One* Vice *in particular*; was, that he might *raise the Attention* of his Disciples, to be aware of the Great *Danger* and numerous *Temptations*, to which an uninterrupted State of *Worldly Prosperity* does continually expose men. He *expressly* represents the *Rich man*, as condemned to the Place of Torment; But *What* his *Vices* were, he leaves to be *collected* from the *Circumstances* of the *whole* Parable; intimating, that no man could be ignorant, *what* are the Temptations incident to such a State. *Riches*, *Honour*, *Power*, *Reputation*, and other the like Worldly Advantages, 'tis evident, are not themselves *criminal*; nay, on the contrary, they are real *Blessings* of Providence; *Talents*, by the right Use of which, men may obtain a great Reward; *laying up in store for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come, that they may attain eternal Life*. But *Who*, that knows the nature of Mankind, and observes what has *generally* happened in the experience of All Ages and Nations; *Who* can assure himself, if he was to be invested with *arbitrary Power and Dominion*, that he could execute That Trust without any of that *Tyrannical Spirit*, which the Governors of this World have generally been so fond of? *Who* can rely upon himself before-hand, that if he was to be advanced to the highest Pitch of *Honour and Grandeur*, he should wholly stand clear of all that *Pride and Insolence*, which has so frequently accompanied Other men's *Ambition*? *Who can* be sure, if he should on a sudden find himself surrounded with *immense*

menſe Riches, with *Eaſe and Plenty and Flattery* on all ſides, that he could reſiſt all thoſe Temptations to *Voluptuouſneſs and Luxury*, by which Thouſands and ten thouſands have been ruined before him? For *This reaſon* our Lord, in almoſt all his Diſcourſes, ſeems as it were to *affect* always, upon *This head*, to uſe the *ſtrongeſt* and to *Us* ſurprizing expreſſions. *Wo unto you that are Rich, for ye have received your Conſolation:* And, *'Tis eaſier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a Rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.* The Senſe, as I have ſhown, is; not that the Poſſeſſion or Enjoyment of the Bleſſings of Providence in This life, is itſelf criminal; but that the *Temptations* to *abuſe* thoſe Bleſſings, are *Many* and *Great*, and require an excellent Temper of Mind to overcome them. The *Intention* of Chriſt, in ſo *frequently repeating* his Admonitions of *This* ſort, was *twofold.* That it might be matter of *Comfort* to the *Poor*, to conſider, that *virtuous Poverty* is no mark at all of the Divine diſpleaſure; but *particularly*, when occaſioned by Perſecution for righteouſneſs ſake, it entitles men on the contrary to an extraordinary Reward. And on the other ſide, that he might give *perpetual Caution* to the *Rich*, that they *ſo* uſe the things of this *preſent World*, as that the ultimate Deſign of all their Actions may have a conſtant View to *That which is to come.* By *This means* only, can they be effectually ſecured, from falling into the ſame *Fault* with the Rich man in this Parable, and into the ſame *condemnation.* Conſider always, that *This World* is not our final State: In all things *whatſoever thou takeſt in hand, remember the End, and thou ſhalt never do amiſs*; Ecclus. vii. 36.

SERMON XIII.

Of the equitable Diſtribution of Things at the laſt Day.

1 PET. iv. 17, 18.

For the time is come, that Judgment muſt begin at the Houſe of God: And if it firſt begin at Us, what ſhall the End be of them that obey not the Goſpel of God? And if the Righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear.

AS men who govern themſelves continually by Regards to Reaſon and Truth, by Principles of Virtue and Religion, by the Rules of Juſtice and Integrity; muſt neceſſarily at *all* times, in the courſe of a vicious and debauched world, ſubject themſelves to ſome Inconveniences, which Others eaſily avoid; and deny themſelves ſome Gratifications and Advantages, wherein Others place their chief Happineſs of Life: So at *ſome particular*

Times, and in some *particular* Circumstances and Situations of Things; in times particularly of great Oppression and Tyranny, in Times and Places of great Superstition and Bigottry, in times of prevailing Errors in matters of Religion, Errors violent in their Nature and universal in their Extent; in *These* cases (I say) more *particularly*, men of the greatest Virtue and Integrity may very possibly, merely upon account of their adhering to Truth and of their Fearing God, be exposed to the severest Sufferings, and to the greatest Calamities, that *can* be incident to Humane Life. This was, in a very extraordinary degree, the Case of the *Apostles* and *primitive* Christians, in the early Ages of the Church: And 'tis *Now* the Case of all such Christians, who, in Countries overrun with the Tyranny and Superstitions of Popery, have the Courage to profess the great Truths of the Gospel.

'TWAS, at the time of St *Peter*'s writing this epistle, (as it has been indeed at all *other* times before and after, both under the *Jewish* and under the *Christian* Dispensation, and under the State of *Nature* too,) a question of considerable difficulty; *whence* it comes to pass, that God, who is as *certainly pleased* with mens adhering at all times to *Truth and Virtue*, as we are *certain* of his *Existence* at all; has yet so frequently thought fit to permit the *best* and most *valuable* men, (if *Truth* and *Virtue* be of *Any Value*,) to be liable in many cases to undergo the greatest of Sufferings; and to become, of all men upon Earth, possibly the most miserable. To This the Apostle replies, in This and the foregoing Chapters; that they who *suffer* at any time, not as Malefactors, but *according to the Will of God*,

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ver. 19; have abundant reason to *commit the keeping of their Souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator*; There being in the Order and Method, and in the nature of the general and perhaps necessary Laws of God's Government of the Universe, *many wise Reasons*, (some of which we know, and others 'tis no wonder we should at present be ignorant of,) why things are for a time permitted to be in such a disorderly state. That, *One* reason *in particular* is, that *the Tryal of* mens *Faith*, (ch. i. 7,) *being much more precious than of Gold that perishes though it be tried with Fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.* That *Suffering* at any time for well-doing, is *not* a thing to *be ashamed* of, (ch. iv. 16;) but on the contrary to be looked upon as a *glorifying of God*, and doing Honour to Truth and Virtue. That *Afflictions* of different kinds, have in all Ages been *accomplished* (ch. v. 9,) *in our Brethren that are in the world.* That even *Christ* himself went before us in This respect, (ch. ii. 21,) *leaving us an Example, that we should follow his steps.* And that therefore good men ought never to *think it strange concerning the fiery Tryal which is to try them; as though some strange thing happened unto them*, ch. iv. 12. *For the time is come*, saith he, *that Judgment must begin at the house of God: And if it first begin at Us, what shall the End be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the Righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear?*

I. *First*; *The* Time *is come, that Judgment must begin.* These words suppose, (which is the *First Particular* observable in my Text; and which, in the nature of *all Government*, is a thing necessary in itself;)

ſelf;) that, in the Order and Method of God's Government of the Univerſe, there muſt be certain *Periods of Time*, certain proper *Seaſons*, (to be determined by the Wiſdom of Him who ruleth over All;) for *Judgments of Correction*, upon thoſe who are capable of Amendment or Improvement; and *Judgments of Condemnation*, upon thoſe who are finally worthy of Deſtruction. Without *This* Diſpoſition of things *in general*, there would be no ſuch thing in the World, as Government *at all*. God would indeed be an All-ſkilful *Artificer*, or Author of the Univerſe, as his *Workmanſhip*; and an All-powerful *Lord*, and Diſpoſer of all things, as his *Property*: But he would have *No* Kingdom or Dominion over *Subjects*; He would be No *Legiſlator*, Moral *Governour*, or *Judge*, having Rule over *rational* and *free* Agents. And were not the Order and Method of things *ſo* diſpoſed *in particular*, as that there were certain *Times* appointed, and proper *Seaſons* for Judgment, after the accompliſhment of the reſpective *Periods* of certain great and long-connected Events; but *Juſtice* were *immediately* executed, every moment: There could be no proper *Tryals* of many particular *Virtues*; there could be no *Space* for *Repentance*, *Correction*, and *Amendment*; there could be no manifeſtation * of the *Depth of the Riches both of the Wiſdom and Knowledge of God*, and of the other Attributes of the divine Nature, in the great Revolutions of Providence, and in the various Diſpenſations of his Goodneſs and Mercy in different Ages and Nations. In the Reaſon and Nature of things therefore, and in the Method of God's Allwiſe Government; there muſt be, at the *Conſumma-*

* Rom. xi. 33.

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tion and Period of any System of Rational Creatures (such as *Mankind* are,) a *General Judgment*, for the final *Separation and Punishment* of the incorrigible: And, at *intermediate* times, *particular Judgments*; for the *Tryal* and *Improvement* of *Virtue*, and for the *Correction* and *Amendment* of such as are capable of being reformed; that, as the Scripture expresses it, they may *be purified, and made white, and tried*; Dan. xii. 10.

II. *Secondly*; *Judgment must* begin at the House of God: This is the *Second Particular*, observable in the Text; The *Persons*, upon whom *Judgment* must *first* begin. The *Kingdom* of God, or his *Dominion absolutely*, is over *All*; over those who *know* him, and those who *know* him not, over those who *obey* his Laws, and those who regard them *not*. But the *House* or *Family of God*, or (as 'tis sometimes called in Scripture) the *Houshold of Faith*, are Those only, who *know God*, and *acknowledge* him as their *Father*; professing to *obey* his *Will*, and to govern themselves by his *Laws*. These are always represented as being his *Children* and his *Servants*; while the *Ungodly* and *Profane*, are spoken of as *Enemies*. Now the same Perfections of the Divine Nature, and the same essential Rules of Government, which require that God should finally *destroy* his incorrigible *Enemies*; require likewise, that he should *correct* the Imperfections of his *Servants*, and, by proper Tryals, *improve* and *confirm* the Virtue of such as are capable of *Amendment*. *God*, is (in the language of the Gospel-Parables) the Supreme *Housholder*; the *Father of All*; the *Father, of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named*; Eph. iii. 15. In This Houshold or Family of God, *Christ* governs

verns *as a Son, over his own House*; Heb. iii. 6. *Moses*, was *faithful in* it, *as a Servant*, ver. 5; And so were the rest of the Prophets and Apostles. All *virtuous and good* men, in All Ages and in All Nations, and under All Dispensations of Religion; under the Light of Nature, under the Law of *Moses*, and under the Gospel of *Christ*; are of this *Houshold of Faith, Children of God*, obeying his Commandments, trusting in his Providence, and waiting for the accomplishment of his Promises in due season. God, who best knows the Method of his own Government, and the Reasons of that Method; who best knows the ways of bringing about his own Purposes, and what is in itself best absolutely and finally in the whole; has in his infinite Wisdom thought fit to appoint, that, in this present State, his Children and Servants, those who in my Text are stiled *The House of God*, should, generally speaking, have their Faith and Patience tried with Difficulties and Discouragements of various kinds. Concerning *Christ* himself, the Apostle tells us, 'twas what the Method and all-wise Reasons of God's universal Government required; 'twas what *became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things*; that, *in bringing many Sons unto Glory*, he should *make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through Sufferings*; Heb. ii. 10. And 'tis a very extraordinary Expression, which he adds upon This head, ch. v. 8; that Christ our great High Priest, *though he were a Son, yet learned he Obedience by the things which he suffered.* Now, (to use our Lord's own Argument,) if these things are spoken concerning the *Master of the House, how much more* concerning *them of his Houshold?* For *the Disciple is not above his Master, nor the Servant*

vant above his Lord; *It is enough for the Disciple that he be as his Master, and the Servant as his Lord*; Matt. x. 25. The *Patriarchs* of old, though they were in a peculiar manner the Servants of God, and Heirs of the Promises; and *Abraham* particularly, by a very singular and distinguishing Appellation, stiled *the Friend of God*, Jam. ii. 23; yet with so many Difficulties were they perpetually tried, that *they confessed they were* only *Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth*, Heb. xi. 31. *Moses*, though by divine appointment the Leader of God's people; yet his undertaking of That Office, is in Scripture stiled his *chusing to suffer* Affliction *with the people of God*, and his *esteeming of the* Reproach *of Christ* to be *greater Riches than the Treasures in Egypt*; ver. 25, 26. After This, in the Ages, before the Coming of Christ, the *Condition* of those persons, concerning whom the Apostle declares, that of *Them the World was not worthy*, Heb. xi. 38; The *Condition* (I say) and the *State of Life* of these persons was, that they *had Tryal of cruel Mockings and Scourgings, yea moreover of Bonds and Imprisonment*; And that they *wandered about,——being destitute, afflicted, tormented*, ver. 36, 37. Our *Lord himself*, and his *Apostles*, met with the like Treatment *themselves*; And both *He* and *They*, constantly testified to their Followers in the generations to come, that * *All who would live godly in Christ Jesus, should* (in some manner or other) *suffer Persecution*: In *Some* Ages, and in *Some* Countries, from the Malice of unbelieving *Jews* and *Heathens*: At *other* Times, and in *other* Places, from the Bigottry of idolatrous and tyrannical *Christians*: And that, at *all* Times and in *all* Places, even

* Tim. iii. 12.

where

where Christianity should be most universally professed, and *when* it might seem most to prosper; still men of Truth and Virtue should continue perpetually exposed to Inconveniencies and Disadvantages of diverse kinds, from the strong Prejudices and manifold Iniquities of a vicious and debauched World. The Reason, *one* Reason at least, why, in the course of Providence, these things *must* be; is for the *Trial of* mens *Faith*, as St *Peter* expresses it, 1 *Pet.* i. 7; for the *Trial* of their *Fidelity*, of their Stedfastness to the Principles of Truth and Virtue. That *they which are approved*, that is, who are *Proof* against the Temptations of an unrighteous World; *may be made manifest*; 1 Cor. xi. 19. Hence the Apostle to the *Hebrews* exhorts, ch. xii. 5. *My Son, despise not thou the chastning of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth; and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth.* Not *for* his *own Pleasure*, ver. 10; *but for Our profit, that we might be partakers of his Holiness:* For though *no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of Righteousness, unto Them, which are exercised thereby:* ver. 11.

Now from hence, by the way, appears clearly the Folly and Vanity of the Popish notion of *Purgatory:* Where men are supposed to be tormented in such a *manner*, and at such a *Time*, (after this State of *Probation* is intirely *over*,) that the Asserters of it do not *Themselves* pretend that there is *There* Any *Tryal* of mens *Faith* or *Virtue*, or Any Room either for *Amendment* or *Improvement:* Which the Scripture expresly declares to be the End of all God's *Temporal Judgments*, and of all the *Afflictions* and

Chastisements

Chastisements which he sends upon his children whom he *receives* and *loves*; Heb. xii. 6.

III. A *Third* Particular, worthy of distinct Observation, in the words of the Text; is That Severe Doctrine, which may seem to be included in the Supposition here put: *If the Righteous scarcely be saved.* That *Virtue* and *Righteousness* should be in Any Danger of being finally miserable; or that, by Any Appointment of *God*, the Salvation of *Virtuous* and *Good Men* should become improbable or uncertain; is undoubtedly inconsistent with the Nature, and with the Perfections of *God*. But the persons to whom is here given the Denomination of *Righteous*, are persons considered as indued with *such* Righteousness, as does by no means give them a *Claim of Righ* to Happiness. They are *Righteous*, not in the Eye of the *Law* of *Righteousness*, but in the *favourable* construction of the *Gospel* of *Mercy*: Righteous, not by having *never transgressed* the Commands of God, but by having obtained *Forgiveness of their Sins* upon *Repentance*: Righteous, not in the Accounts of strict *Justice*, but in the *gracious estimations* of *Goodness and Compassion*. They are *such* persons as St *Paul* had in view, when he speaks of *God* as *justifying the ungodly*, Rom. iv. 5: *Saying, Blessed are they whose Iniquities are forgiven, and whose Sins are covered*: ver 7. Now concerning *Such* persons, 'tis no great Wonder the Scripture should speak in such manner, as to represent its being a thing *difficult* in *itself*, and an *extraordinary* Instance of *Goodness* in *God*, to bring them to be partakers of *Everlasting Happiness*. The Nature of God's *Justice*, and of the rest of his divine *Perfections*; the necessary *Rules* and *Measures*, of his eternal *Government* over the Uni-

verse; and the *Qualifications*, essentially necessary to the State of *Heaven*; may very reasonably make even the *Best of men* apprehensive, that they can *very hardly* be thought *worthy* of That State. The *Extraordinariness* of the *Method* of God's manifesting his Mercy, by the Incarnation of Christ; The singular *Condescension* of *our Saviour himself*, in being willing thus to take our Nature upon him; The greatness of the *Sufferings* he himself underwent, in this State of Humiliation; And the manifold Afflictions wherewith God hath thought fit that great Numbers of the best of his Servants, in almost every Age of the World, should (as the Scripture expresses it) be * *purified and made white and tried*; and with which the † *Gate* has been *straitened*, and the *Way to Life* has (as the word in the Original signifies (been *narrowed* and *beset with Difficulties*: All these, are Considerations naturally and necessarily leading us to This Apprehension, that the Salvation of Men, the exalting *such* a kind of Creatures as sinful Men are, to *such* a State of Happiness as the Gospel proposes; is not a matter, which, in the natural Progress of Things, might have been expected to be accomplished *in course*; but is certainly a very *great*, and, in the Method of God's eternal Government over the Universe, an *extraordinary* Effect of the Divine *Goodness and Mercy*. This is the *least* that can be meant, by That Expression of the Apostle in my Text; *If the Righteous scarcely be saved*. And the Design of it, is; not to terrify and discourage men, in the practice of Virtue; but, on the contrary, to convince them of the indispensable Necessity of a real and effectual Amendment of

* Dan. xii. 10. † Matt. vii. 14.

Manners;

Manners; and to show them the reasonableness of Patience and Contentment under such Afflictions and Difficulties, wherewith God, who knows better what is useful for them than they can possibly judge for themselves, thinks fit at any time to make Tryal of their Faith and Constancy.

IV. *Fourthly* and *Lastly*; The *Last* thing observable in the words of my Text, is the *Inference* the Apostle here draws from the Observation he had laid down. *If Judgment must begin at the House of God*, and even *the Righteous scarcely be saved*; then *What shall the End be of them that obey not the Gospel?* and *Where shall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear?* This is indeed *just* matter of *Terrour* to *Wicked and Profane* men: And therefore, *knowing the Terrour of the Lord, we perswade men:* 2 Cor. v. 11. *The Ax is now laid to the Root of the Trees*, according to *John the Baptist*'s description of the Gospel-Dispensation: And *every Tree which bringeth not forth good Fruit*, shall certainly be *hewn down and cast into the Fire:* Wherefore, *Bring forth* (says he) *Fruits, worthy of Repentance*; Luke iii. 8, 9. The Prophet *Ezekiel*, describing in figurative language the final Destruction of the Wicked, represents the Lord giving Command to the destroying Angel, ch. ix. 6; *Slay utterly old and young*, (except such as are There directed to be spared;) *And begin*, saith he, *at my Sanctuary*. 'Tis probably the *very Expression* alluded to by *the Apostle* in my Text; *Judgment must begin at the House of God.* In like manner in *Jeremiah*, God in prophetical language Thus threatens the wicked Nations of the Earth, ch. xxv. 29; *Lo, I begin to bring evil on the City which is called by my Name; and should Ye be utterly unpunished?* The

Sense is the same, as of those words of *Solomon*, (which in the *Greek* Translation are the *very words* of St. *Peter* in my Text,) *Prov.* xi. 31, *Behold, the Righteous shall be recompensed in the Earth,* (that is, shall be punished for their Offences;) *much more the Wicked and the Sinner.* What our Saviour said upon another occasion, *Luke* xxiii. 31, may very properly be applied Here; *If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* If God's *Judgments of Correction* seem to us severe *Here*, what shall be his *Judgments of Destruction* Hereafter? If our present *Afflictions* which are *but for a moment*, seem grievous and unsupportable; then *who among us shall dwell with everlasting Burnings?* Isai. xxxiii. 14.

VICIOUS and profane men are very apt to flatter themselves with Hopes of final Impunity, *always* from *groundless*, *often* from *inconsistent* and *contradictory* Arguments. *God*, they are sure, is infinitely and essentially *Good:* Therefore they cannot perswade themselves, he will ever make them *miserable.* Or, on the contrary; Many men, they actually see and know, are under *very miserable* Circumstances: Therefore they cannot believe, that the World is under the Government of a *Good God. Both* these *Conclusions*, are absurdly drawn from *Conjecture* against *Fact*; Whereas, on the contrary, all *True Reasoning* proceeds, from Facts *at present* certainly known, to what may *consequently* be expected hereafter. The *Being* and *Perfections* of *God*, are *absolutely demonstrable*; both in the *Nature of Things*, and from the *Frame of the Universe.* The *miserable Circumstances* of many persons here upon Earth, is also a *certain Truth*; not depending on the Faith of remote History, but seen every day in present Fact.

What

What therefore vicious and unrighteous men see with their own eyes, that the Divine Perfections *can* permit to happen in this *present* time and place, and in a *mixed* World of *good* men and *bad*; How can they expect it should not be permitted *hereafter* in a much *greater degree* and in a more *lasting manner*, when the *Wicked* shall be separated into a World *by themselves*.

I SHALL conclude with the Addition of this One necessary Caution, upon account of many melancholy pious persons; That, in like manner as the *Righteous* spoken of in the Text, are not Persons in a State of *Innocency*, but *Penitent Sinners* not without *difficulty* saved; so *the ungodly and the Sinners* here threatned with such severity, are not *Sincere* persons *overtaken with Faults*; but such, of whom St *Paul* says (1 *Tim.* i. 9,) that *the Law was made for the ungodly and for Sinners, for the unholy and profane, for Murderers and Whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.*

SERMON XIV.

Of GOD's disposing all Things to their proper Ends.

PROV. xvi. 4.

The Lord has made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

THE Book of *Proverbs* is a Collection of wise and useful Sayings and Observations, not put together in the way of a continued Discourse, but singly without any order or method: not in the way of a continued Discourse; but as Sentences of themselves pithy and momentous; and containing each of them singly, Matter of wise Instruction, and fit to be enlarged upon in our Meditations. The meaning therefore of any particular Doctrine laid down in this Book, is not ordinarily to be discovered (as in other Books of Holy Writ,) by comparing it with the Context going before or after; but is to be sought for only in the Words themselves, by considering their true and proper signification, examining them by other places of Scripture, and comparing them with the general Reason of things and the Analogy of Faith. The

Words

Words now read unto you, are a remarkable instance of this kind; having no Light afforded them from any thing in the Context; containing in themselves a very weighty and important Doctrine; yet not without considerable Difficulty and Ambiguity in the Expression. For if we take the Words in the Sense our Translators understood them, to signify that God created all things, merely for his own Glory and Pleasure; it is very hard to apply the latter part of the Words, as if God made the *Wicked* also for his own Pleasure, and on purpose to manifest his Power in their Destruction: And if we render the words *more properly* and *more agreeably* to the original, not, *the Lord has made all things for* himself, but *the Lord has made all things suited* or *fitted each to other*; yet still it will deserve to be considered, how God can be said to have *made* or *fitted* the wicked to Destruction; *The Lord has made all things suitable to each other, yea even the wicked to the day of evil.* I shall *first* consider the Words in the Sense our Translators apprehend them; and *secondly* in that *other* Sense, which seems, according to the original, to be their stricter and more proper signification; and wherein the *latter* part of the Text answers more directly to the *former*.

I. *First*, in the Sense according to which our Translation renders them, the *former* part of the Words contains a plain Doctrine, that *God created all things merely for his own good pleasure, without any external Motive*; The *latter* part contains a Question of great Difficulty, how God can be said to have made even the *wicked* for himself, for the manifesting of his Glory *in the Day* of Punishment; *The Lord has made all things for himself, yea even the wicked for the day of evil.*

I. In

1. In the *First* Sense of the Words, the former part of them contains a plain and evident Doctrine, that *God created all things merely for his own good pleasure, without any external Motive.* And indeed *external Motive* 'tis impossible *he* could have *Any*, when in the Universe there was *nothing* existing without himself; Other Motive, besides his own good pleasure, he possibly could have *none*, who was already Infinite in all Perfections, and absolutely Self-sufficient to his own Happiness. The *good Pleasure* of God therefore, is the only reason why things were brought into Being at all; and *for himself* only *has the Lord made all things.* The Ignorance of debauched Imagination, and the Vanity of corrupt Philosophy departing from True Reason, made wicked and foolish men of old, seek out for *other* causes of the Existence of Things. Some fancied the World eternal by Necessity of Nature; and were so absurd as to imagine, that it was a satisfactory account of the cause of the Existence of such an infinite Variety of things, to affirm that they existed without any cause at all. Others ascribed the Formation of this beautiful Fabrick of the World, to blind Chance; and were so foolish as to contend, that That which could not account for the Beauty and Contrivance of any single part, might yet be a sufficient cause of the Production of the Whole. But the Light of *natural Reason* itself, when carefully attended to, abundantly confuted these Follies; and to inquisitive Persons, *the invisible things of* God *from the Creation of the World* were *clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.* Yet because all Men had not leisure and abilities to study the Works of *Nature*, God was pleased to declare himself by a clear *Revelation*

to

to persons of *all* capacities, to be the Creator of Heaven and Earth, and of all things that are therein. By *this* Character he made himself known to the Patriarchs and to the *Jews*, and distinguishes himself from Idols which are no Gods. Upon *this* account he is every where in the Old Testament described as receiving Glory, because that *by the word of the Lord were the Heavens made, and all the Host of them by the breath of his Mouth:* and in the New Testament St *John* in his Vision describes all Creatures praising God upon this account, and saying; *thou art worthy O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.* Rev. iv. 11. *For his* Pleasure; that is, By his alone Will and All-powerful Command: Not that he himself stood in *want* of any thing; but only his *Goodness* moved him to bring creatures into Being, *on* which he might *display* that Goodness, and *to* whom he might *communicate* his Happiness. This is sometimes expressed otherwise, by God's doing things for his own *Glory*; Is. xliii. 7; *I have created him for my* Glory, *I have formed him, yea I have made him.* The *Glory of God*, is not any thing properly relating to *himself*, any Advantage or Benefit to *Him*; but 'tis the communicating of his Goodness, by Creating the World; the promoting his Likeness among rational Creatures, by the Practice of Righteousness; and the making them partakers according to their capacities, of some degrees of that Happiness, which in Himself is infinite and incomprehensible as his Nature, and boundless as his unlimited Duration. This is the meaning of God's *making all things for himself*, who yet stands in want of Nothing: This is *his* establishing a Kingdom in the

the World, whose Kingdom yet by Nature ruleth over all; This is *his* doing all things for his own Glory, whose Glory yet is capable of no Accession. * *For of him, and thro' him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory and dominion for ever.*

2dly, THE latter part of the Words, according to the present interpretation, contains a Question of great Difficulty; how God can be said to have *made even the* wicked *for himself*, for the manifesting of his Glory *in the day of Punishment*; *The Lord has made all things for himself, yea even the wicked for the day of evil.* And here there have been some men so very unreasonable, so little regardful of the natural and unchangeable Perfections of God, and so little attentive to the true scope and design of the Scriptures, as to contend that God has *on purpose* made many Creatures necessarily inclined to Wickedness, that he might manifest his Power and Authority in their Destruction. As if the infinitely merciful and good God, whose tender Mercies are over all his Works, could take delight in the Misery of his Creatures; or as if the Absolute Sovereignty and Power of God, could be any ways advanced by the Destruction of finite Creatures, which, in respect of his incomprehensible Greatness, are less than nothing and Vanity. No: Our very *Natural Notions* of God, ascertain us that this is utterly inconsistent with the Nature of Him who is perfect Goodness: And the *Revelation* he has made to us of himself in Scripture, is in nothing more full, than in this declaration, that the *Destruction* of Sinners is *from themselves*, and that God has *no Pleasure in the Death of him that dieth*; but only,

* Rom. xi. 36.

as a Wise and Good Governour, he finds it necessary to cut off those that will not be reformed. * *God made not Death, neither has he pleasure in the destruction of the Living; But ungodly men with their Works and Words called it unto them: For God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity; But thro' envy of the Devil came Death into the World, and they only who hold of his side do find it;* [Wisd. i. 12.] or, as 'tis excellently expressed by the Author of the Book of Ecclus; ch. xv. ver. 11. *Say not thou, 'tis thro' the Lord that I fell away; for thou oughtest not to do the things that he hateth; Say not thou,* he *hath caused me to err; for he hath no need of the sinful man; The Lord hateth all abomination; and they that fear God, love it not; He hath set before man life and Death; and whether him liketh, shall be given him; He hath commanded no man to do wickedly, neither hath he given any man licence to sin.* His *Power* stands in no need of wicked men to accomplish his designs, tho' he sometimes makes use of them as the most proper instruments; and his *Justice* makes it impossible he should be the Author of Sin, in order to show forth his Severity in the Punishment of it. Concerning the destruction even of the *Heathen* Nations, the *Jewish* Writer of the Book of *Wisdom* declares honourably concerning God: † *Who shall accuse thee for the Nations that perish, whom thou hast made? For,* seeing *thou art righteous thyself, thou orderest all things righteously; thinking it not agreeable with* Thy Power, *to condemn him that has not deserved to be punished.* Nothing therefore is more impossible, nothing more blasphemous

* Wisd. i. 12. ii. 23. † ch. xii. 12.

against

against God; than to imagine that *he* created any Beings, with *design* that they might be wicked and miserable. Nevertheless, because 'tis certain that nothing comes to pass without his Permission, nothing subsists but by his Power and Concurrence, nothing is done but by the Use or Abuse of those Faculties which *he* has created; therefore in Scripture phrase, by a figurative expression, and in acknowledgement of the Supreme Superintendency of Providence over all Events, *God* is represented as *doing* every thing that is *done* in the World. When a man is slain by accident, and without *any* ill intention in him that did it; *God* is said to have *delivered* him into the hand of his Neighbour; *Exod.* xxi. 13. When Satan tempted *David* to number the people, as the Scripture expresly assures us, 1 *Chron.* xxi. 1; yet, because it could not be done without God's permission, therefore the same Scripture elsewhere expresses it, as if * *God* had moved *David* to number *Israel* and *Judah*; and sometimes speaks of God's † *sending upon men an evil Spirit*, and God's § *sending them strong delusion*, *very* figuratively and improperly speaking: for, speaking strictly and literally, as *God cannot be tempted with evil*, so *neither tempteth he any man*; Jam. i. 13. When any Calamity befals a Nation or People; because it cannot be without the direction of Providence, ‡ *God* is represented as *Creating* a new thing; *Is.* xlv. 7, *I form the Light, and create Darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things*; and *Amos* iii. 6; *Shall there be evil*

* 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. Jud. ix. 23. † Is. xxix. 10, 13. Ezek. xiv. 9. 2 Thess. ii. 11. § 1 Kings xxii. 22. Job. xii. 16. ‡ Rev. xvii. 17.

in a City, and the Lord has not done it? Some have been so inconsiderate, [not to say profane,] as to understand these passages, to signify God's *decreeing* all the Wickedness that is practised in the World; Whereas on the contrary, even of *natural* evils, of Afflictions and Calamities, it is true only in a *figurative* Sense that they are of *God's* creating; for properly and in reality, they are drawn down only by men upon *themselves*, by their own Wickedness and Incorrigibleness. When *good* men, by the knowledge and Assistances of the Gospel, sincerely obey the Will of God, and abound in works of piety and righteousness; because 'tis *by grace* they *are saved*; because 'tis by the undeserved mercy and favour of God, that That Knowledge and That Assistance is granted to them; therefore they are stiled, his *Workmanship*, created *in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that* they *should walk in them*; Eph. ii. 10. On the other hand, because wicked and incorrigible men are at length forsaken by the Spirit of God, and left in the hands of their own counsel; the effect of which desertion, is their becoming insensible and hardened in Habits of Sin; therefore *God* is said in some places, not *to have* given *them an heart to perceive, and eyes to see*, Deut. xxix. 4; nay, actually to make *the ears* of such people *heavy*, and to *shut their eyes, that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand*; which in other places is expressed by way of complaint, because *they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand*; Matt. xiii. 14. In like manner, because wicked and disobedient persons when they obstinately reject and oppose the Gospel; do exactly answer

anſwer the Character by which the Prophets of old deſcribed ſuch perſons in their predictions; therefore they are ſaid in Scripture to have been *before of old* ordained *to this condemnation*, Jude iv. to be *veſſels of wrath* fitted *to deſtruction*, Rom. ix. 22; *whereunto alſo they were* appointed, 1 Pet. ii. 8. *fitted to deſtruction*; not by any Decree or appointment of God; for on the contrary God is declared in the very ſame verſe, to have *endured* them *with much* long-ſuffering, waiting for their amendment: but *fitted* by their own obſtinacy for *that deſtruction*, which the Prophets foretold was *ordained* to come upon ſuch perſons. When God by many repeated trials made *Pharaoh*'s obſtinacy conſpicuous to the World, and his Puniſhment exemplarily remarkable; this is expreſſed in Scripture by *God*'s hardning *Pharaoh*'s heart, and *raiſing him up* (or making him eminent) *for the ſame purpoſe, that he might ſhew his Power in him, and that his Name might be declared throughout all the Earth*; Rom. ix. 17. And concerning wicked *Chriſtian* Princes in Corrupt times, God *hath put it in their hearts*, ſaith the Angel, *Rev.* xvii. 17. *to fulfill his Will, and to agree and give their Kingdom unto the Beaſt*, i. e. to the *Romiſh* tyranny, *until the words of God ſhall be fulfilled. Laſtly*, becauſe God in every Work of Creation and Providence, and particularly in his diſtribution of Puniſhments to the Wicked, manifeſts his Power and Wiſdom and Juſtice to the World; therefore in the Text God is repreſented as having *made all things for himſelf, yea even the wicked for the Day of evil.* In which, and many other the like places, the Scripture uſing a figurative manner of expreſſion, in aſcribing thoſe things to God, of

which he is not properly and strictly the Author, but which he only makes use of in the Wisdom of Providence, as Instruments to bring about his just and wise designs; it is therefore a great abuse and misinterpretation of Scripture, to infer from any such passages as these, as if God was literally the Author or Cause of any man's Sin, or as if he made any man wicked, with *design* to manifest his Severity in making him miserable. On the contrary, the Scripture in numberless plain places, which cannot be mistaken, declares with sufficient clearness the literal meaning, which lies under these figurative expressions; and it is obvious enough to any one that compares the different passages before cited, that this expression in the Text, that God has *made even the wicked for the day of evil*, can mean nothing more, than what in other words is thus expressed by *Job*, Job. xxi. 30; *The wicked is* reserved *to the day of destruction; they shall be* brought forth *to the day of wrath.* And more largely by the Son of *Sirach*, ch. xi. 16; xxxix, 25; xl. 9; *Errour and Darkness had their beginning together with Sinners, and evil shall wax old with them that glory therein: For the good, are good things created from the Beginning, so evil things for Sinners: Death and Bloodshed, Strife and Sword, calamities, famine, tribulation and the Scourge, These things are created for the Wicked, and for their sakes came the Flood.* Which *day of Wrath*, so far as it signifies the execution of *temporal* judgments only, is thus excellently described in the book of *Wisdom*, ch. v. ver. 20; *His severe wrath shall he sharpen for a Sword, and the World shall fight with him against the unwise: Hailstones full of wrath, shall be cast as out of a stone-*

bow;

bow; and the water of the Sea shall rage against them, and the floods shall cruelly drown them; Yea, a mighty Wind shall stand up against them, and like a storm shall blow them away; thus iniquity shall lay wast the whole Earth, and ill-dealing shall overthrow the thrones of the Mighty.

II. *Secondly*; IT remains in the *second* place, that we consider the Words of the Text in their other and more proper rendring, wherein the *latter* part of the words answer more strictly to the *former*; *The Lord has made all things suited to each other, yea even the wicked to the day of evil.* And in *this* Sense, the general doctrine they contain, is evident; that God has made every thing fitted for its proper end and purpose, and wisely contrived to answer its intention. The only question *here*, is, how God can be said to have *fitted* the wicked to Destruction. But *this* difficulty also will disappear, if we consider, that, according to the nature of the *Jewish* language, *fitting the wicked to the day of evil*, signifies nothing more, than causing wickedness and punishment to be proportionable; that is, not that God *causes* wickedness to be at all, but that he causes punishment to be proportionable to the wickedness that he finds in Men. And this is not only an Instance, but of all others the greatest and most eminent instance, of the Wisdom and exact Adjustment of the Works of God. *Good is set against Evil, and Life against Death; so is the godly against the sinner, and the sinner against the godly: So look upon all the Works of the most High, and there are two and two one against another:* Ecclus. xxxiii. 14. Or, as it is in the Text; *The Lord has made all things suitable to each other, yea even the*

wicked to the day of evil. As God has made every thing throughout the World in exact proportion, so particularly in this has he taken especial Care, that sooner or later, by direct consequence or by positive infliction, by the natural effect of the things themselves or by the immediate interposition of his own Authority, either in the present state or at least in the Life to come, Wickedness and Misery shall bear a just proportion to each other. This Adjustment of mens condition to their deserts, is the true Greatness and Glory of a Kingdom; and as illustrious a Manifestation of the *Justice and Majesty* of God in his Government of the *Moral* World, as the Beauty and Harmony of the Parts of the *Material* World, and the wonderful Fitness of every thing therein to its proper End, is an undeniable Manifestation of his Power, and Wisdom in the Works of *Nature.* In the Frame of *Nature,* God has *ordered* and disposed *all things,* as the Wise man expresses it, * *in measure, number, and Weight.* He *by his Wisdom made the Heavens, and stretched out the Earth above the Waters*; He *made great Lights, the Sun to rule the day, and the Moon and the Stars to govern the Night:* Ps. cxxxvi. 5. He hath replenished the Earth with suitable inhabitants; each in their proper places; the Land, with Beasts and Insects, the Air with Birds, the Water with Fish; To each of these he has furnished their proper Food, and *given them their meat in due season*; He has adorned the Earth with Plants and Flowers, mixing usefulness with Variety, and cloathing each with inimitable Beauty; so that even *Solomon himself in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these:* He has tempered the Cold, with the use of Fire; and the

* Wisd. xi. 20.

Heat

Heat with perpetual gentle Winds; He has appointed the Day, for Work and Labour; and the Darkness of the Night, for Rest and Refreshment: And *over all* his Works, he has placed *Man*, as the Lord and Owner of all; capable of knowing, and of obeying his Creator; capable of applying the whole Creation, to his own Use and Benefit; capable of contemplating in every part of the Universe, the Wisdom and Glory of its Maker; so that thro' *him*, all the Works of the Lord, animate and inanimate, by furnishing variety of materials for *Man*'s Contemplation, may properly enough be said, themselves to *praise the Lord*, to *bless him and magnify him for ever*. These things cannot be better expressed, than in the Words of the Holy Psalmist, *Ps.* civ. 1. *O Lord, thou art very great, thou art cloathed with Majesty and Honour*; —— *who stretchedst out the Heavens like a curtain*; —— *who laidest the foundations of the Earth*, —— and *coveredst it with the deep as with a garment*; —— *He sendeth the springs into the vallies, which run among the hills; They give drink to every Beast of the Field, and the wild Asses quench their thirst; By them shall the Fowls of the Air have their habitation, which sing among the branches: He watereth the hills from his chambers, the Earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy Works: He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of Man; He appointeth the Moon for certain seasons, and the Sun knoweth his going down*; and so on through the whole Psalm. Thus in the Fabrick of the *natural* World, God has *made all things suitable* to each other, every thing exactly fitted, and proportioned with the greatest and most exquisite Wisdom, to the End

for

for which it was intended. In the Government of the *Moral* World, in his ordering of rational Creatures, the *Justice and Equity* of God is no less exact, than his *Wisdom* is conspicuous in the Fabrick of the *Material* one. He has fitted and adjusted every thing with the utmost exactness and congruity, *even the Wicked to the day of Evil*; the *Punishment* of Sin, to the degree of its *Demerit*. And this, both in the natural constitution of things, and by the positive interposition of his Power and Authority. *First*, in the natural consequence and constitution of things, and in the ordinary course of Providence, he has, with great proportion, annexed the *Day of Evil* to the *Practice of Wickedness*. As *Light is sown for the Righteous, and joyful gladness for them that are upright in Heart*; so *he that soweth Iniquity, shall reap Vanity*, Prov. xxii. 8; or, as 'tis expressed, *Job* iv. 8, *I have seen them that plow Iniquity, and sow Wickedness, reap the same*. As *the Work of Righteousness*, is *Peace*; *and the Effect of Righteousness, Quietness and Assurance for ever*; so the Wicked *shall eat of the Fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices*; Prov. i. 31. The Scripture every where represents Misery, as the proper and natural consequence of Sin: *Is.* iii. 10; *Say ye to the Righteous, it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings: Wo unto the Wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him*: And *Jer.* ii. 19, *Thine own Wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore and see that 'tis an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God*. And the Wise man, among things that have the most *necessary* connexion, reckons a *rod for the*

Fool's

Fool's back, Prov. xxvi. 3; and ch. xix. ver. 29, *Judgment*, says he, *is prepared for Scorners, and Stripes for the back of Fools.* And not of Wickedness *in general* only, but of most *particular* Vices also, it is observed in Scripture, that they bring along with them, and are naturally suited to, their proper *day of Evil.* Of *Intemperance*, that it destroys the health of the Body; of *ill-gotten Riches*, that they either *make themselves Wings and fly away*, or are *kept* by *the owners thereof to their Hurt*: of *Envy*, that it *slayeth the silly one*, and consumeth him as the *rottenness of the Bones*; of *Pride*, that it *goeth before destruction, and a haughty Spirit before a Fall*; of *Judas*'s betraying his Master to Death, that the guilt of it brought *him* to an untimely and unnatural Death, *that he might go to his own Place*; of the idolatrous Heathens who *changed the Truth of God into a Lie*, that by the practice of unnatural and dishonourable Vices among themselves, they *received in themselves that recompence of their Error which was meet*: Rom. 1. 27.

But *secondly*, besides this natural Tendency of Things themselves, *God* does moreover take care, by the positive interposition of his Power and Authority in the World, that every evil Work shall have its proper recompence in the *day of evil.* Most strictly and exactly shall this be done at the great and final day of Accounts, *when God shall bring every Work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.* But very frequently even in this *present* World, is the Sinner recompenced according to his doings; and not unusually in the very same manner, and by the same things that were the instruments of his Sin. *He*

hath

hath graven and digged up a pit, and is fallen himself into the destruction that he made for other; For his travail shall come upon his own head, and his Wickedness shall fall on his own pate; Ps. vii. 16. The Scripture affords us many Examples of this kind: Of *Adonibezek*, who suffered the same cruel Treatment, which he himself had formerly exercised upon others; so that he was forced to confess, *Judg.* i. 7; *As I have done, so God has requited me.* Of *Agag*; to whom *Samuel* declared, 1 *Sam.* xv. 33; *As thy Sword has made Women childless, so shall thy Mother be childless among Women.* Of *Joab*; to whom *the Lord returned his blood upon his own Head, who fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, and slew them with the Sword*; 1 Kings, ii. 32. Of *Haman*, who fell by the same ignominious Death, which he had prepared for a man more excellent than himself; *Esth.* vii. 10. Of *David* himself, for his great Sin in the matter of *Uriah*; when upon account of the Murder he had committed, it was declared to him from God, that *the Sword* should *not depart from his house for ever*; and upon account of his *Adultery*, that his *own Family* should be permitted to be dishonoured *publickly*, in reproof of the crime that he had committed in *secret*. *Lastly*, of the whole Nation of the *Egyptian* Idolaters: concerning whom the Author of the Book of *Wisdom* thus expresses himself, ch. xii. ver. 23; and xi. 16; and xv. 18, compared with xvi. 1; *Whereas men have lived dissolutely and unrighteously, thou hast tormented them with their own abominations: They worshipped Beasts that are most hateful: — therefore by the like were they punished worthily, and by the multitude of Beasts tormented: For the foolish de-*

vices

vices of their wickedness, wherewith being deceived they worshipped serpents void of Reason, and the vilest of beasts; thou didst send a multitude of unreasonable Beasts upon them for vengeance; That they might know that wherewithal a man sinneth, by the same also shall he be punished.

THE *Use* of what has been said, is, 1*st*, that we justify God, and give glory to him in all his proceedings; whose Pleasure it is not, that any man should be wicked; but he punishes them *here*, that they *may* repent; and *hereafter*, if they repent *not*. There is nothing in the whole tenour of Scripture more sollicitously provided against, than that men should not think God to be Author or Decreer of Sin. In numberless places he declares to Sinners, that their Destruction is wholly of themselves, that they bring it upon themselves by their own obstinacy only, and that he hath no pleasure at all in the Death of Him that dieth: And a very severe reproof is given to such as speak otherwise of God; *Jude* 15; *Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his Saints, to execute judgment upon All, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their* Hard Speeches *which ungodly Sinners have spoken against Him.*

2*dly*, THAT if we would escape the *day of evil*, we must avoid the *wickedness* to which it is annexed. There is nothing more unreasonable, than for men to live viciously, and yet hope to escape the necessary consequences of their Vices. Happiness in the Nature of *God*, is in conjunction with perfect Righteousness and Holiness: Happiness in the Nature of *Things* can arise only from the Participation of those divine

Perfections:

Perfections: Happiness therefore in *Men*, cannot be in connexion with Impiety and Vice. And if it naturally *were* possible; yet it would not be *fit* for God to permit the just proportions of things to be so disorder'd: For it *becomes* the Almighty Governor of the Universe, and his Justice and Wisdom are highly concerned therein, to *make every one thing answerable to another, even the wicked* and *the day of evil.*

SERMON

SERMON XV.

Of a Future Judgment.

ACTS xvii. 31.

Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in Righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained.

THERE is no where in the whole *New Testament* a more sublime and affectionate Summary of the Christian Doctrine, than in this Discourse of St *Paul* to the men of *Athens*. *Athens* was at that time the Seat of Learning in *Greece*, the Great Resort of Philosophers of all Sects, and of the ablest and most accomplished men in every part of Literature. Whatever the Light of Nature and Reason, assisted with all the Helps of acquired Learning, could possibly discover, concerning the *Nature of God* and of *true Religion*; might *naturally* have been expected to be met with *here*. *Here*, if in *Any* part of the World, it was reasonable to imagine, might have been found *Numbers* of men, free from the contagion of those gross Superstitions and absurd

 Idolatries,

Idolatries, which had overſpread the ignorant and unlearned World. But on the contrary, in *Fact*, it appears from This Hiſtory of St *Paul*, and from the agreeing account which all *Other* Ancient Writers give us of this matter; that This School of Reaſon and Philoſophy, this eminent Seat of Learning, was itſelf as deeply overwhelmed and buried in Superſtition and Idolatry, as any Other part of the leſs Learned World. The *obvious Inference* from which obſervation, is, the *Uſefulneſs* and *Neceſſity* of *Revelation*. For how true ſoever it be, (as moſt true and certain it is,) that the Principles of true Religion are perfectly agreeable to Nature and Reaſon, and may even demonſtrably be deduced from thence by irreſiſtible Arguments; yet ſo it was, that Few or None of theſe moſt Learned Philoſophers, either Themſelves *ſaw and traced this Light* of Reaſon and Truth, or *dared to diſcover and recommend* it to Others. From whence it evidently appears, that thoſe *Right Notions* concerning *God* and the *Natural Obligations of Religion*, which are now ſo plain and obvious in *Reaſon*, that they are urged by Many as an Argument againſt the *Needfulneſs* of any *Revelation at all*; are themſelves generally borrowed from the Light of *Revelation*, even by Thoſe who uſe them as an argument *againſt* it. But This, *by the way*.

THE Diſpoſition of the City of *Athens*, at the time St *Paul* travelled That way, being ſuch as I have deſcribed; *his Spirit was ſtirred in him*, ver. 16, it filled him with great and juſt indignation, to ſee ſo eminent a City *wholly given to Idolatry*. And becauſe the Perſons he was at This place to converſe with, were principally Philoſophers, and men of Reaſon and Argument; *here* therefore was a noble

Field

Field for him to diſplay the whole Force and Power of his Eloquence. And what our Saviour ſaid concerning the *Samaritan City* coming out to hear him, *Lift up your eyes, and look on the Fields, for they are white already to Harveſt*, John iv. 35; might now, in all Appearance, *much more* have been ſaid concerning the Apoſtle's Auditory at *Athens*. To draw to him their Attention, and cauſe his Diſcourſe to enter more effectually into their Minds; he makes an accidental Remark upon Somewhat he had obſerved in the place, to be the ſeeming occaſion of what he had to propoſe to them. *As I paſſed by*, ſays he, *and beheld your Devotions, I found an Altar with This Inſcription, To the Unknown God*; ver. 23. This naturally ſuggeſted to him to mention, both the *Knowledge* they already in Some Meaſure had of the *True God*, and at the ſame time the extreme *Ignorance* their Manner of Worſhip ſhowed they were in, of his *True Nature and Attributes*. That God, *therefore*, ſays he, *whom ye ignorantly worſhip, Him declare I unto you*. And Thus, beginning at what they already profeſſed to know, he deduces his Argument through what they could not but acknowledge, to a concluſion neceſſarily inferring what they would gladly have denied. Firſt he alledges to them, that *the God who made the World and all things therein, the Lord of Heaven and Earth*, ver. 24, muſt (according to True Reaſon) be acknowledged to be One Omnipreſent Being, who is not *far from every One of us, for in Him we live and move and have our Being*. That, conſequently all things being the Works of his Hands, the Light of Nature itſelf teaches us to diſcover him, and the Works of the Creation naturally lead men to him: *He hath made of One Blood all Nations of Men*,

(ver. 26,) *for to dwell on all the face of the Earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their Habitation: That they might seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him.* From This natural Notion of God, which the *Athenian* Philosophers could not deny, the Apostle immediately proceeds to urge them with this most obvious deduction, in reproof of their idolatrous Worship; that This Omnipresent God, who made and governs the Universe, *dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands, Neither is worshipped with mens Hands, as though he needed any thing; seeing he giveth to All, Life and Breath and all things*, ver. 25: And that He, whose *Offspring* We ourselves are; whose Workmanship not only the *material World*, but even *rational and immortal Spirits* are; cannot Himself be *like unto Gold, or Silver, or Stone, graven by Art or Man's Device*; ver. 29. This being itself exceeding clear, and what the Philosophers were very sensible of; yet the *great Ignorance* in which the generality of the World was involved, he tells them, would *extenuate* in some degree, in the Eyes of a merciful God, the Folly of the deluded Nations: *The Times of this ignorance, God winked at*; ver. 30. But then at the same time, from this *general Ignorance*, which prevailed notwithstanding the clearness of the thing itself in point of true Reason, he argues very strongly for the needfulness and credibility of a *Revelation*: ver. 30. *But now he commandeth all men every where to repent; Because he hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the World in Righteousness.* And from thence he lets himself into the Proof of the *Christian* Revelation *in particular*: God *will judge the World by That man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given*

ven assurance unto all men, in that he has raised him from the Dead.

In discoursing upon which Subject, I shall lay before you some brief Observations, upon the *following Particulars* contained in the Words. 1*st*, The *Proof* we have, that there *shall be* a *Judgment:* God *will judge the World.* 2*dly*, The *Time*, when This *Judgment* shall be: *He hath appointed a Day, in the which he will judge the World.* 3*dly*, The *Person*, by *whom* the World shall be judged: He will judge it *by That Man, whom he hath ordained.* 4*thly*, The *Persons, who* shall be *called into Judgment:* It is the Whole *World.* And *Lastly*, the *Manner* or *Method*, in which this Great Affair will be transacted: He will judge in *Righteousness.*

I. *First*; The *Proof* we have, that there *shall be* a *Judgment*, is very strong and clear, both in the *Reason* of *Things*, and in the *Revelation* of *God*. *Revelation* here, does but *confirm* what *Reason* teaches; and *Reason* makes *credible* the *Revelation*. The Difference between Good and Evil, between Virtue and Vice, is (in the *Nature* of Things) essential, necessary, immutable, and eternal. And what our Saviour says in the Gospel, with relation to the unchangeable *Determinations* of *God*; is *in This case* equally true in the very *Nature* of the *Things* themselves; *Heaven and Earth shall pass away*, but *not a tittle of the Law shall* ever *fail.* This natural and essential Difference between Good and Evil, every *rational Mind* is as necessarily sensible of, as every *Eye* distinguishes between Light and Darkness: And upon This is founded That natural Conscience, whose *gentle* Admonitions, and yet Admonitions that *will be* heard, are to every man the perpetual *Still Voice* of

God. Even *the Gentiles*, ſaith St *Paul*, *by Nature, having not the Law, are a Law unto themſelves; which ſhow the work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Conſcience alſo bearing Witneſs, and their Thoughts the mean while accuſing or elſe excuſing one another:* Rom. ii. 14. Men *have* therefore, even by the *Light of Nature*, a *Rule* to walk by; They *ſee*, and *diſtinguiſh*, what is *Good* or *Evil*; They *chuſe freely*, and *determine* their own Actions; They *reflect* upon what they have done, with an unavoidable *Senſe* of having done *well* or *ill:* They are, conſequently, capable of *Accounting* for what they do; being worthy either of *Blame* or *Commendation*, either of *Puniſhment* or *Reward*. Wherefore if there be a God who governs the World, who gave men theſe rational and moral Faculties, and who has himſelf any Real Concern about Good and Evil; (without which, he would not indeed be *Governour of the World*, that is, he would not be *God*, but mere *Fate* or *Nature:* If there be a *God*, I ſay, who *governs* the World,) it cannot but be *One* proper *Act* of his *Government*, to bring to Judgment ſuch Creatures as are capable of being judged, and to reward or puniſh them according to their Behaviour. Which ſince it is not done *here*, (as indeed the proper Seaſon of Judgment, is not till the Time of Tryal be accompliſhed;) it follows neceſſarily that it muſt be done *hereafter*. This is the manifeſt Voice of *Nature* and *Reaſon:* And to *confirm* this Great Truth by the immediate *Authority of God*, to make it ſtill more *evident* even to the meaneſt Capacities, and to *inculcate* it with greater *Strength* and *Weight* upon Mankind, is the principal End and Deſign of *Revelation*. In This, All our Saviour's Diſcourſes, and thoſe of his Apoſtles, terminate;

nate; in assuring us, that *God will bring every Work into Judgment, with every Secret thing, whether it be good or evil.* That *to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality,* he will give *eternal Life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness, Indignation, and Wrath: Tribulation and Anguish upon every soul of man that doth Evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.*

II. THE *Second* Particular observable in the Text, is the *Time when* this Judgment shall be: *He hath appointed* a Day, *in the which he will judge the World.* The word, *Day,* in this place, and in all other Texts of Scripture, where *the* Day *of Judgment* is spoken of; is not at all needful to be understood of that particular *Portion* or *Quantity* of Time, which we call *a Day*; But it signifies only, in general, a *determinate Time* or *Season,* how *short* or how *long* soever the *Continuance* or *Duration* of it may be. And God's having *Appointed* this Time, does not signify his declaring *when* it is to be, but only the certainty of his having decreed that it *shall* be. On the contrary, the *particular Time when* the World shall be judged, is One of Those Secrets, which, for the wisest Reasons, (that men might *watch* and *be ready always,)* the *Father* has reserved *in his own Power. Of that Day and Hour,* says our Lord, *knoweth no man, no not the Angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but my Father only*; Mark xiii. 32; Matt. xxiv. 36. *This only* does the Scripture assure us, that *as a Snare shall it come on all them, that dwell on the face of the whole Earth.* That as, in the days before the *Flood*; and as, before the overthrow of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah,* men were *eating* and *drinking,* and thought

not

not of the Destruction till it came upon them; *so also shall the coming of the Son of man be.*

THERE were Some in the Apostles times, who, by misapplication of certain Prophecies relating to the Destruction of the *Jewish* State, thought the World was to end in That Age. But from our Saviour's own Prophecy, that *Jerusalem* should be *trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*; (which is plainly a long season;) And from the Apostle's exhortation, *Let no man deceive you by any means, by word or letter as that the day of Christ is at hand; for That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and That man of Sin be revealed*; From these Passages, I say, 'tis evident, that not the End of *the World*, but the Destruction only of *Judæa* was to be expected in That Age. Nevertheless, *whatever* be the Time, how *near* or how *far off* soever, when the World is to end; it makes no difference at all to any *particular person*; seeing *His* particular Concern in the Judgment of the Great Day, depends intirely on the State wherein *He himself* shall leave the World; which Time, he is sure, cannot be *very far* distant from him.

III. THE *Third* thing proper to be taken notice of in the Text, is, *the Person* By *whom* the World shall be judged: God will judge it *By That man whom he hath ordained.* The *Light of Nature* teaches us, that *God will judge the World*; and Revelation has declared to us, that He will judge it *By Christ*. The *Difference* of the *Person Judging*, makes not indeed any *Difference* in the *Rule* by which we shall be judged. But 'tis a *Signification* of God's *merciful Intentions* towards Mankind, that he has *Appointed* the *Same* person to be our *Judge*, who *condescended* to take our Nature upon him, to be made subject to all our Weaknesses

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and Infirmities, and to be tempted in all things like as We are, Sin only excepted; Who therefore *can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself also was compassed with Infirmity.* And at the same time on the other hand, 'tis an *Aggravation* of the Ingratitude and of the Terrour of presumptuous and impenitent Sinners, to consider that the same merciful Saviour, who gave himself for them to have redeemed them from Death, and sent them so many gracious Invitations to Repentance, shall, after all his Offers of Mercy have been despised, *come* Himself *with ten thousand of his Saints, to execute Judgment upon All:* That he *shall come in the glory of his Father, and all his Holy Angels with him*; and *shall sit on the Throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all Nations:* That *he shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God; Before whose face the Earth and the Heaven shall flee away, and there shall be found no place for them:* That he *shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel.*

IV. The *Fourth* Particular observable in the Text, is, the *Persons* who shall be *called into Judgment:* He will judge *the World*; that is, All Mankind from the Highest to the Lowest. *For he which is Lord over All, shall fear no man's person, neither shall he stand in awe of any man's Greatness; for he hath made the small and great, and careth for all alike*; Wisd. vi. 7. By *Greatness* therefore shall no man prevail, nor by *Smallness* shall any one be concealed. *Say not Thou,* (as 'tis excellently expressed in the Book of *Ecclesiasticus*; *Say not Thou,) I will hide myself*

myself from the Lord; *Shall Any remember Me from above? I shall not be remembred among so many people*; *For what is my Soul among such an infinite number of creatures? (Say not this,* says he: For) *Behold, the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens, and the Deep, and the Earth, and all that therein is, shall be moved when He shall visit: The Mountains also, and Foundations of the Earth, shall be shaken with Trembling, when the Lord looketh upon them: No heart can think upon these things worthily, and Who is able to conceive his Ways?* ch. xvi. 17. In This judgment therefore (I say) no one whatsoever, shall upon Any account be *exempted*, or *concealed*. *Force* or *Power* shall avail nothing, and *Meanness* or *Littleness* will afford no Plea. *Riches* shall find no place for *Bribery*, and *Poverty and worldly Considerations* move no *Compassion*. *Fraud and Skill* will be able to make no *Evasions*, nor *Multitudes and Numbers* lessen the *Terrors* of That Solemnity. But the *Righteous* alone *shall be exalted in That day*, and shall appear with *joy unspeakable and full of Glory*, *Then* the Wicked *repenting, and groaning for anguish of Spirit, shall say within themselves*, (Wisd. v. 3.) *We Fools accounted his Life Madness, and his End to be without Honour*; *How is he numbred among the Children of God, and his Lot is among the Saints!——What hath Pride profited us? or what good hath Riches with our Vaunting brought us? All those things are passed away like a Shadow, and as a Post that hasted by.* And *Rev.* vi. 14, *The Heaven departed as a Scroll when it is rolled together, and every Mountain and Island were moved out of their places. And the Kings of the Earth, and the Great men, and the Rich men, and the chief Captains, and the Mighty men, and every Bondman, and every*

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Freeman, hid themſelves in the dens, and in the Rocks of the Mountains: And ſaid to the Mountains and Rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that ſitteth on the Throne, and from the Wrath the Lamb.

V. THE *Fifth* and *Laſt* thing needful to be remarked in the Text, is the *Manner* or *Method*, in which This Great Affair will be tranſacted: He will judge in *Righteouſneſs*. That is: Every man ſhall be rewarded or puniſhed, according to his *deſerts*; according to what he has done in the Fleſh, whether it be good or evil. For the Judge of the whole Earth will do what is right, and *with Equity ſhall he judge the Nations.* And our Saviour himſelf Thus deſcribes it, *Rev.* xxii. 12; *Behold, I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give every man according as his Work ſhall be. Not* therefore according to *empty Notions* and *contentious Opinions*, which fooliſh men earneſtly diſpute about: *Not* according to mens *Faith* or *Knowledge*, if they be void of the Fruits of Righteouſneſs: *Not* according to mens *Zeal* in particular *Parties* and *Factions*, or in the bare outward *Profeſſion* even of the true *Religion* itſelf: *Not* according to the *uncharitable judgment*, which raſh men are apt to paſs one upon another: *Not* according to any *unconditionate Decree*, or *Fore-appointment* of *God*: But according as men have lived in the ways of *Piety*, or *Profaneneſs*; in *Sobriety*, or *Debauchery*; in the Practice of *Righteouſneſs*, *Goodneſs*, and *univerſal Charity*; or of *Injuſtice*, *Iniquity* and *Unrighteouſneſs*; according to *This*, ſhall the final Sentence paſs.

FATAL therefore is the Miſtake of all thoſe, who expect to be judged by *Any Other* Meaſure. Who, without true Virtue, expect to be ſaved, by means of any

any thing they can possibly do for *themselves*, or that *any other Persons* can do for them. Who hope to obtain Salvation, either by any *unconditionate Favour and Decree* of *God*; when the Apostle expresly declares on the contrary, that God is *no Respecter of Persons*, and that he hath *chosen* men *to Salvation through Belief of the Truth, and Sanctification of the Spirit.* Or who rely on their *zealous external Profession* of the *True Religion*; when even to those who *taught in his Streets, and in his Name* had *cast out Devils*, and *done many wonderful Works*, yet our Saviour replies, *I know you not whence ye are, Depart from me, all ye Workers of Iniquity.* Or who hope to be saved, by virtue of *Any superstitious Commutations*; As the *Pharisees*, who under Pretence of contributing to the Service of the *Temple*, excused men from relieving the Necessities even of their *Parents themselves*; Matt. xv. 5. Nor is the Errour of *Those men* at all less fatal, who depend that they shall be saved by their *Faith*; if thereby they mean any thing else than That Obedience *of Faith*, as the Apostle stiles it, which is the *Practice of Righteousness.* Or that they shall be saved by the *Merits of Christ*; if thereby they mean any thing else, than the *Terms of That Covenant* for the Acceptation of Repentance, which is the *Purchase* of the *Merits and Death of Christ.* Or that they shall be saved by *Grace*; if by That Term they mean any thing else than the *Gospel itself*, even *That Grace of God which bringeth Salvation*, by *Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World, Looking for that Blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

THE *Application* of what has been said, is;

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1*st*; IF These things be so, and there *is* certainly a Judgment to come; Then let us *All* frequently and seriously consider with ourselves, as St *Peter* admonishes, 2 *Pet.* iii. 11; *Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness: Looking for and hasting unto the Coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent Heat.*

2*dly*; SEEING *the Time* when this Judgment shall be, (or, which to *Us* is the same thing, *the Time* when *we ourselves* shall depart out of This World,) is altogether *uncertain*; Let us therefore continually set before our eyes that Advice of our Saviour, *Luke* xxi. 34; *Take heed to yourselves lest*—— *That day come upon you unawares*; *For as a snare shall it come on all them, that dwell on the face of the whole Earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.* And if any *Damage* at any time befal us, for the sake of a good conscience; let us say with That brave person, in 2 *Maccab.* vii. 11. *These I had from Heaven, and for his Laws I despise them, and from Him I hope to receive them again.* And when we see Great Wickedness perhaps prosper for a time, let us remember the Admonition of *Solomon*, Prov. xxiii. 17; *Let not thine Heart envy Sinners, but be thou in the Fear of the Lord all the day long*; *For surely there is an End, and thine expectation shall not be cut off.*

3*dly* and *Lastly*; IF the *Manner* and *Method* of this final judgment, shall be *in righteousness*, according to every man's *work* that he has done, whether it be *good* or *evil*; Then let us continually be aware,

that all *Other* expectations whatsoever, are mere Deceits. And let us always remember those remarkable words, with which our Saviour concludes his Sermon on the Mount: *Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock: And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell, and great was the fall of it.*

SER-

SERMON XVI.

That every Man ſhall finally receive according to his Works.

GAL. vi. 7.

Be not deceived, God is not mocked: For whatſoever a man ſoweth, That ſhall he alſo reap.

IN theſe Words we may obſerve, 1*ſt*, the General and Fundamental Doctrine of True Religion; that every man ſhall finally receive of God, according to what he has done: *Whatſoever a man ſoweth, That ſhall he alſo reap.* 2*dly*, A Declaration, that every Opinion or Practice, that ſubverts This Great and Fundamental Doctrine; is, in reality and in true conſequence, a *Mocking of God*; *God is not mocked*; *For whatſoever a man ſoweth, That ſhall he alſo reap.* 3*dly*; An Admonition or Warning, that, how pernicious ſoever, and how manifeſtly ſoever pernicious, every ſuch Opinion or Practice is; yet many deceitful Conſiderations there are, which (without due Care) will in event draw men into ſo

great a Destruction: *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.*

I. *First*; HERE is laid down the General and Fundamental Doctrine of True Religion; that every man shall finally receive of God, according to what he has done: *Whatsoever a man soweth, That shall he also reap.* This Maxim, is the Reason and End of All *Laws*, the Maintenance and Support of all *Government*, the Foundation and Ground-work of all *Religion*. In *Other* matters therefore, which are of *less* importance; in opinions of *particular* and more *minute* consideration; which depend on a variety of Circumstances, and on the Truth of Many collateral Notions which must carefully be compared together: In *These* there will always be room for difference of Apprehensions, and Many *Errours* possibly may be of small Consequence. But *This* Doctrine, of Rewards and Punishments finally proportionable to mens Behaviour; is the *Root* of Virtue, and the *vital Principle* of Religion. 'Tis a Truth of the *same Certainty* and of the *same Importance*, with the Acknowledgment of the very *Being* of God, and of the natural and essential Difference between Good and Evil. For which reason the Apostle in the Text, by a very lively and expressive figure, represents it under the similitude of things which have *in Nature* the most immediate and necessary Connexion: *Whatsoever a Man soweth, That shall he also reap.* And what our Saviour alledged upon *another* occasion, to express the reasonableness of judging concerning mens *Hearts* from their *Actions*; may no less properly be applied here, as a Rule for every man to judge from his *present Actions* concerning his own *Future State*; *Men do not gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thistles.* As the *Fruit* is always

ways of the *same kind*, with the *Stock* that bears it; and the *Grain reaped*, is necessarily of the same sort with the *Seed* that was *sown:* So mens final State of *Happiness* or *Misery*, shall be the proper and correspondent Effect of their *present Actions*. *He that soweth to his flesh*, (as the Apostle expresses it in the words following my Text,) *shall of the flesh reap corruption: But he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap Life everlasting*. In the *present* time, we frequently see This *in some degree* verified, in what we usually call the *Natural Course and Consequences of Things*. In the *Future State*, after what manner the Effects and Operations of *Nature* will proceed, we are Now altogether ignorant: And therefore we represent to ourselves very justly and with the greatest Reason, every Circumstance of *That* State, as the immediate Effect of *God's final Judgment*, and the direct execution of the irreversible Sentence. Yet were we able to discern, or had God thought fit to discover to us, the *Particulars* of This Whole Proceeding; the *Difference* perhaps of God's several Ways and Methods of Acting, would not appear so Great to us, as we are apt to imagine. The *Certainty* at least of the *Connexion*, and the *proper correspondency* of the *Events*, would be altogether as *conspicuous*, and appear as far removed from Any degree of *arbitrary Uncertainty*, in all those things, which we ascribe to the *immediate Judgment of God*; as in any of those which we Now look upon, as arising from the *Natural Consequences and Connexion of Things*. For, What are the Natural *Consequences and Connexion of Things*, but the *Result* of *That Order and Disposition* of Things, which *God originally established* in the Creation? And the very *same Power*, which established

and preserves this Order of Nature, has *appointed* likewise the *Connexion of Consequences* in the Progress of the Moral State of the World. However *different* therefore the *Manner* and *Method* of God's operations may be, in these two *different* Governments of such *very different* kinds of Subjects; yet the *operation* may, in *Each*, be *equally regular in its kind*; And the proper *Effect* or *Event*, corresponding to the antecedent Cause, whether in the *Natural* or *Moral* World, may be alike *Certain* and *invariable* in *Both*. When, in the Course of *Nature*, we see Grain, sown in the Earth, produce regularly and uniformly, after certain stated Periods of Time, Fruit of the same kind with That which was sown; we are very apt to let the Wonder slip out of our Minds, and lose the whole Force of its impression, merely by affixing to it a *word* of *No* signification, and calling it by the Name of *Natural*: Whereas, in Truth, inanimate *Nature* is nothing but an *empty Sound*; Unintelligent *Agents* and *Powers*, (as we improperly call them,) are nothing but *mere Instruments*; and the Whole Effect is *really* the *Operation* of *Him*, who is the *Author and God of Nature*. By the *Disposition* and *Appointment* of the *Same* Author and Ruler of the Universe, the *Moral* Consequences and Connexions of Things do, in *Their proper manner*, and at *Their proper Seasons*, take place likewise in the World. And could our Faculties extend themselves, to take in at One View those *larger Periods* of the Divine Dispensations, on which depends the Harmony and Beauty of the *Moral* World; in like manner as our experience enables us to contemplate the *Yearly* Products of *Nature*: We should *Then* probably be no more struck with Wonder, at the seeming *Forbearing* of Providence to interpose *at present* in the ordering of

of the *Moral* State of the World; than we are *Now* surprized, in the *regular course of Nature*, to see Grain lie as it were dead in the Earth in Winter, and seemingly dissolving into corruption; and yet, without Fail, at the Return of its proper Season, bringing forth the certain particular Fruit, of which it was the Seed. The Apostles Similitude therefore in the Text, not only *in general* is a *Certain and Infallible Truth*, but very probably may be also a Truth which has *in itself* a more *immediate and necessary connexion*, than men are usually sensible of. It is not only true, that God has *actually* set before men such and such Promises and Threatnings; but probably it will be found true also, at the final issue and event of Things, that he has appointed by as *close and regular a Connexion*, in *Morals* as in *Naturals*, that *whatsoever a man soweth, That shall he also reap.*

In the *Natural and Material* World, the *More Observations* men make, and the *greater Accuracy* they arrive at, and the *Longer Periods of Time* they are able to take in; the *more clearly and distinctly* do they discern, that in That innumerable Variety of the Works of God, all things conspire uniformly, with the most exquisite exactness, to produce (and That sometimes out of the Greatest seeming Confusions) the propereſt and most regular Effects. The *Moral* World, is of infinitely greater Importance: 'Tis That, for the *sake of which* the *material World* was created; and *without which*, this beautiful and stupendous Fabrick of the *inanimate* Universe is Nothing. It cannot be doubted then by Any reasonable person, but that the Same Wisdom, which, in the *unintelligent Works of Nature*, has shown forth itself

itself in the contrivance of such inexpressible Aptnesses and Proportions of Things; will *much more* in the Government of *Rational Beings*, (which are in a far *nobler* and *more proper* Sense the Subjects of God's Power and Kingdom,) show forth itself finally in making every Event, through a wonderful variety of different Dispensations, terminate at length in most evident and illustrious Manifestations of perfect Justice, Goodness and Truth.

HOWEVER therefore *Melancholy pious* persons, patiently persisting in the Practice of their Duty, may, when they observe how Providence in *the present Time* suffers all things seemingly to go alike to all, be hereby sometimes tempted almost to despond; yet in reality their Reward is laid up for them with God *much more certainly*, than Grain which in the Winter seems to lie dead in the Earth wherein it was sown, may yet be depended upon to bring forth Fruit in its Season. The *Psalmist* expresses This very emphatically, *Psalm* xxvi. 6. *They that sow in Tears, shall reap in joy: He that now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his Sheaves with him.* The *Figure* is the same with that in the Text: And the *literal meaning* of it is well expressed by the Author of the Book of *Wisdom*, ch. iii. 4; and v. 15; The righteous, *though they be punished in the Sight of Men, yet is their Hope full of Immortality*; For *their Reward is with the Lord, and the Care of them is with the most High.* And by the *Apostle* himself, *Rom.* ii. 7; *To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and Honour and Immortality*; to Them God will give *eternal Life.* And therefore he exhorts, *Heb.* x. 35; *Cast not away therefore your Confidence,*

Confidence, which hath great Recompence of Reward. For ye have need of Patience, that, after ye have done the Will of God, ye might receive the Promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. And St *James* in like manner, ch. v. 7; *Be patient therefore, Brethren, unto the Coming of the Lord. Behold, the Husbandman waiteth for the precious Fruit of the Earth, and hath long Patience for it, until he receive the early and latter Rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your Hearts; for the Coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*

ON the contrary; However *Presumptuous and Careless* persons may deceive themselves with numberless vain Imaginations, expecting to *reap where they have not sown, and to gather where they have not strawed*; yet, as certainly as the *Nature of Things* is unvaried, and the *Perfections of God* unchangeable; the final issue of things in the *future State* will be *universally*, what *Job* observes it to be *sometimes* even in the *present* State; ch. iv. 8; *I have seen, they that plow iniquity and sow wickedness, reap the same: By the Blast of God they perish, and by the Breath of his Nostrils they are consumed.*

THIS therefore is the *First Particular* observable in the Text: The Apostle here lays it down as the General and Fundamental Doctrine of True Religion, that every man shall finally receive of God, according to what he has done; *Whatsoever a man soweth, That shall he also reap.*

II. *Secondly*; HERE is a Declaration, that every Opinion or Practice, that subverts This Great and Fundamental Doctrine; is, in reality and in true Consequence, a *Mocking* of God: *God is not mocked*; *For whatsoever a man soweth, That shall he*

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also reap. The word, *mock*, which in the *New Testament* is *in the Original* expressed by two or three *synonymous* Terms;] in its *literal* and most proper Sense; signifies, *Deceiving* any person, *deluding* him, or *disappointing* his *Expectation.* Thus *Matt.* ii. 16; when *Herod* had ordered the Wise men to bring him word where Jesus was; and, by their returning privately into their own country another way, found himself disappointed of his expectation; the Text expresses it, that he *saw he was* Mocked *of the Wise men.* At *other times*, it signifies *affronting* or *abusing* any person by *open violence.* Thus *Matt.* xx. 18; *The Son of man shall be betrayed unto the Chief Priests and Scribes; and they shall——deliver him to the Gentiles, to* Mock *and to scourge and to crucify him.* And *sometimes* it signifies *pretending Obedience and Respect*, by way of *Derision*, in a *scornful, insulting*, and *despiteful* Manner. Thus *Matt.* xxvii. 29; *When they had platted a crown of Thorns, they put it upon his Head, and a reed in his right hand* for a Scepter; *and they bowed the knee before him, and* mocked *him, saying, Hail King of the Jews.*

In the *literal* and *proper* Sense of the phrase, 'tis *impossible in the nature of Things*, that *God* should in *any* of these ways be *mocked.* But *figuratively, consequentially*, and in *true reality of Guilt and Folly*, All Wicked men, who set themselves to oppose God's Kingdom of Righteousness; who, without Repentance, Amendment, and Obedience to God's Commands, expect to escape, and teach Others that They may escape, his Righteous Judgment; are, in the Apostles estimation, *Mockers* of God. And the Grounds or Reasons, upon which they are *justly* so esteemed, are very evident. For

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1st, SUCH persons, as far as in *Them* lies, *confound* the necessary Reasons and Proportions of Things, and endeavour to *take away* the eternal and unchangeable Differences of Good and Evil; which are the Original Order and Rule of God's Creation, and the very *Foundation* of his Government over the Universe. For, *what* is Government, but the preserving of the Order and Reason of *Things*, and suiting them to the Capacities and Qualifications of *Persons?* To endeavour therefore, either in *Doctrine* or in *Practice*, to *set aside* or to *elude* this great and essential *Distinction* of Things; without which the *Government* and even the *very Being* of God is of no consequence: What is This, but, in the Highest degree, *mocking* of God, and taking away the *very Notion* of a Supreme Lord and Governour of the Universe? What is it else but mens taking upon themselves to be wiser than God; and presuming that the Consequences of things *ought not* to be what they *are*, or that they *will not be* what he has declared they *shall be?* With regard to the Fabrick and Constitution of the *Material* World, there have in All Ages been some Vain Philosophers, who through Ignorance, and Want of understanding the true Reasons and Uses of things, have been so foolish as to think they could find *Some Particulars Faulty* in the operations of *Nature*, and that they might *more conveniently* have been disposed in some *Other* method. The *Changes* these men would make in the Frame of the World, are *always* such, as would by Some *Other* Consequences, which *Their* short-sighted Presumptuousness is not at all aware of, introduce Confusion and Disorder into the *Whole*. In the *moral* Order of things, the case is exactly the same. Could wicked and debauched men, make

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Evil to be *Good, and Good Evil*; Could they (in the Prophet's expression) make *Darkness* to be *Light, and Light Darkness*; *Bitter* to be *Sweet, and sweet Bitter*: Could they reverse the eternal Laws of Nature, and the Establishment of the righteous Judgments of God: Could they make *Grapes* to be *gathered of Thorns, and Figs of Thistles*; and that They who *sow Unrighteousness* here, should *reap Happiness* hereafter: What would the *Consequence of This* be, but that, for *Their* sakes, the *Nature of Things* and the *Constitution of the Kingdom of God* should be destroyed? *Vain* therefore is *the Flattery* wherewith unrighteous men *deceive Themselves*, and *extreme* the *Presumption* wherewith they *mock God*; when they who *cannot make one Hair white or black*, or *add one Cubit to their Stature*, imagine that their state of Happiness or Misery shall not finally be determined according to that *eternal Reason of Things*, concerning which it may with the most certain Truth be affirmed, that *Heaven and Earth shall pass away*, but *not one Tittle of that Law shall fail.*

2*dly*, THE endeavouring, by *Any Deceit* whatsoever, to elude and set aside this Great and Fundamental Rule; that every man shall finally receive of God, according to what he has done, whether it be good or whether it be evil; that *whatsoever a man soweth, That shall he also reap*: I say, the endeavouring, by *Any Deceit*, to elude and set aside this great and fundamental Doctrine of true Religion; is really, and in true estimation of things, a *Mocking of God*; Not only because 'tis (as I have shown) a Confounding of the *essential and unchangeable Differences of Good and Evil*, the necessary Reasons, Proportions, and Consequences of *Things*; which are the original Order and

and Rule of God's Creation, and the very *Foundation* of his Government over the Universe; But also *further*, because 'tis an Entertaining of *very dishonourable* and *very injurious* Apprehensions, concerning the *Perfections and Attributes* of *God Himself*. I speak not now of *Atheistical* persons, of such as directly *deny* either the *Being* or the *Providence* of God; But of such as either carelessly or presumptuously *deceive* Themselves or Others, by imagining that God has not so great a Concern about Moral Good and Evil, but that they may by some means or other escape his final Wrath, without a life of Virtue and True Holiness. This, I say, is really and in effect taking away his Moral Perfections, and entertaining very dishonourable and very injurious Apprehensions concerning the Nature and Attributes of God. 'Tis divesting him of those Perfections, by which he is (as our Saviour emphatically stiles him) *The Great King*, the Supreme Governour of the *rational* and *moral* as well as of the natural World. And as the greatest Affront that can be offered to the Majesty of any Wise and Just *Prince* here upon *Earth*, is to suppose that his Authority will not be principally employed in promoting the Great Ends and Designs of his Government, and the Support and Security of his own Laws; so the Attempts of wicked men to elude the Great Ends of the *Divine* Government, by substitutiog any thing else whatsoever in the place of Virtue and true Righteousness, in the place of Temperance, Equity, Charity, and Truth; is, in the Apostle's esteem, a *mocking* of God: 'Tis *such* a Mockery of him, as really tends more to hurt and efface in mens minds the true Notion of God, and to hinder the efficacy of Virtue and Goodness in the World, than questioning

even the very *Being* of a Supreme Governour at all. *Ps.* x. 12, xciv. 7; *The Ungodly has said in his Heart, God has forgotten; he hideth away his Face, and he will never see it. They say, Tush, the Lord shall not see; neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.*

3*dly*, As such persons are, in true estimation of things, *Mockers* of God, upon account of their *Confounding* those *essential Differences* of *Good and Evil*, which are the *Foundation* of God's Government over Rational Creatures; and upon account of their entertaining *dishonourable* and *very injurious* Apprehensions concerning the *Perfections and Attributes* of *God Himself*: So they are *still further* guilty of the same charge, in perverting the plain *Revelation* of Christ, and overthrowing the *whole Design* of his Religion. The Great Doctrine *our Lord* came to preach, is This: *Matt.* xvi. 27; *The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his Angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his Works.* Again: *Rev.* xxii. 12; *Behold I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give every man according as his Work shall be.* And the *Sum* of what *his Apostles* taught, amounts always to the same. *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to That he has done, whether it be good or bad:* 2 Cor. v. 10. Whosoever attempts to elude these plain Declarations, by imagining *any other Rule whatsoever*, whereby men shall be judged; (and saying, as the Serpent did to the woman, *Gen.* iii. 4; *Ye shall not surely die*;) does in reality make a *Mockery* of *Religion*; or, as the Apostle expresses it in the Text, *Mocks God* and *Deceives himself*: *Be not deceived,*

ceived, God is not mocked; For whatsoever a man soweth, That shall he also reap.

III. THE *Third* and *Last* Particular I observed in the words, is the *Admonition* or *Caution* the Apostle here gives, that, how pernicious soever, and how manifestly soever pernicious, every opinion or Practice is, which misleads men from this One Great and Fundamental Rule; yet *Many* deceitful Considerations there are, which (without due Care) will in event draw men into so great a Destruction: *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.* But the explication of This, must be referred to a following Opportunity.

SERMON XVII.

That every Man ſhall finally receive according to his Works.

GAL. vi. 7.

Be not deceived, God is not mocked: For whatſoever a man ſoweth, That ſhall he alſo reap.

IN a foregoing Diſcourſe upon theſe words, I obſerved that herein is contained, 1*ſt*, the General and Fundamental Doctrine of true Religion; that every man ſhall finally receive of God, according to what he has done; *Whatſoever a man ſoweth, That ſhall he alſo reap.* 2*dly*, A Declaration, that every Opinion or Practice, that ſubverts this Great and Fundamental Doctrine; is, in reality and in true conſequence, a *Mocking of God: God is not mocked; for Whatſoever a man ſoweth, That ſhall he alſo reap.* 3*dly*, An Admonition or Warning, that, how pernicious ſoever, and how manifeſtly ſoever pernicious, every ſuch Opinion or Practice is; yet Many Deceitful Conſiderations there are, which (without due Care) will

will in event draw men into so great a Destruction: *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.* The *Two former* of these Particulars, I have already discoursed upon: And shall, at this Time, proceed to the *Third* and *Last* of them; namely, the *Many Deceitful* Considerations there are, which (without due Care) will be apt to draw men into the Destruction the Apostle here admonishes us to avoid: *Be not deceived.*

THE *Doctrine* itself; that every man shall finally receive of God, according to what he has done, whether it be good, or whether it be evil; that, *whatsoever a man soweth, That shall he also reap*; is undeniably *proved* by all the *Principles* of *Reason*, and expressly *confirmed* by all the *Notices* of *Revelation.* Yet so manifold and various are the *Delusions* of *Sin*, and such a Mist of Darkness do the Passions and Appetites of men continually cast before their Eyes; that the Apostle thought it necessary to add, with great Affection and Earnestness, the Caution in the Text; and to repeat it frequently elsewhere, upon the like occasion; *Be not deceived.* Thus, 1 *Cor.* iii. 18, 17; *Let no man* deceive *himself: If any man defile the Temple of God, which Temple Ye are*; that is, if any Christian lives a vicious and debauched Life; *him shall God destroy.* And ch. vi. 9; *Know ye not, that the Unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not* deceived: *Neither Fornicators, nor Idolators, nor Adulterers, nor Effœminate, nor Abusers of themselves with Mankind, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.* In like manner, *Eph.* v. 5; *Ye know that no Whoremonger, nor unclean person, has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God: Let no man* deceive *you with vain words; for, because*

of

of These things cometh the Wrath of God upon the children of Disobedience; or, as we read in the margin, *upon the children of Unbelief*, i. e. Even upon *the Heathen World*, 'tis for their *unrighteous* and *debauched* Practices, contrary to the Light of Nature and to the eternal Laws of Truth and Reason, that the Wrath of God is poured down upon them. Again, *Heb.* iii. 12, *Take heed, brethren,——lest any of you be hardened through the* Deceitfulness *of Sin.* And St *John* in his first Epistle, ch. iii. 7; *Little children*, says he, *let no man* deceive *you*; *He that doth Righteousness, is righteous.* These *repeated Cautions* and *Admonitions* of the Apostle, were intended to *warn* us, that there are *Many Deceitful* Considerations, which (without due Care) will be apt to hide from mens eyes the bright and clear Light even of this *evident Proposition* and *great Foundation of Religion*, that every man shall finally receive of God, according to what he has done, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

WHAT the principal of these *Delusions* are in *particular*, is what I have now proposed to consider.

AND here, That which first and most obviously offers itself, in our View of Mankind; is the Deceit men put upon themselves by a general *Carelessness* and *Inattention*. They pursue the Ends of Ambition and Covetousness; they labour continually to gratify their Passions, and Appetites; and consider not at all, that the most High regardeth, and that for all these things God will bring them into Judgment. They see that all things continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation, and go on from generation to generation in one settled course; wherein it fares

very

very much alike, with the righteous and the wicked; *with Him that sacrifices*, and *with Him that sacrifices not*. And This draws them on carelessly in the ways of Sin; as if That which *has* been, is That which *shall* be; and things would never be otherwise than they Now are. The *Folly* of *This Delusion*, lies in *This*; that they consider not, that *One day is with God, as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*. They consider not that there is *a Time for all things*; that God has appointed for every thing its proper Season; that *he has made all things* suitable, each to his correspondent, *yea even the wicked for the day of evil*. The *Deceit* therefore *These men* put upon themselves, is exactly the same, as if any one should imagine, that because during the *Winter* All Seeds lie equally buried and as it were dead in the Earth, therefore in the *Spring* there would be no difference of their Produce, nor of their Fruit in *Harvest*. And This is indeed, a sort of *Infidelity*: 'Tis what the Apostle calls, an *evil heart of Unbelief*: 'Tis a mixture of *Unbelief* and *Carelessness*, *various* in its *Degrees*, and of *spreading influence* in its *Extent*. 'Tis This, to which is principally owing That State of the World, which our Saviour describes, *Matt.* xxiv. 38; *As in the days that were before the Flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entred into the Ark; and knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away: so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

BUT besides this *general Carelessness*, mixt with *different degrees* of *Unbelief*; innumerable are the *Deceits* wherewith those who *seem not* to themselves to make *Any doubt* of the Being and Government

of

of God, do yet continually make shift to *delude* themselves.

SOME judge of *God* by *Themselves*; not according to the *Reason* of *Things*, but by their *own Disposition* and *Temper*. And because *they Themselves* are not apt to be displeased, unless at things *directly injurious* to *Themselves*; therefore they flatter themselves that *God*, who can no way be *injured* by the Sins of men, will not be severe in punishing them; and particularly, that his Anger will not be so highly provoked by Sins of *Debauchery* or *Injustice*, as by *Irreligion* or *Profaneness*. In which matter they *deceive* themselves for want of considering, that *God* is not a *Party*, but the *Judge* and *Governour* of the Universe; who punishes *Wickedness*, not that *He himself* suffers any thing by it, but as being *repugnant* to the *Nature* and *Reason* of *things*, to the eternal *Laws* of His righteous *Government*, to the *Welfare* and *Happiness* of the *whole Creation*.

OTHERS there are, who *deceive* themselves by imagining, that God is pleased or displeased with *little* things, instead of judging of men according to the whole Course and Tenor of a *virtuous* or *vicious* life. And hence, though they are defective in any *Great Point* of Moral Virtue, or indulge themselves in the *Habit* of any plain Vice, of Intemperance or Debauchery, of Fraud, Dishonesty, or Unrighteousness; yet they hope to appease God with some external Forms, with some empty and ineffectual Resolutions, with some extraordinary Solemnities of Worship at certain Times and Seasons, with a zeal for some particular Notions or Opinions; with things which ought not indeed to be *left undone*, but which can by no means make any Amends for the Neglect

of

of the *weightier* matters of the Law, *Justice, Mercy, and Faithfulness.* And This *Deceit* arises, from having false and unworthy Notions of *God*; from supposing him to have a *greater Concern* about *temporary, changeable,* and *merely positive* Institutions, than about those *Great and Eternal Laws,* in which essentially consists his everlasting *Kingdom* of *Righteousness,* and the *Happiness* of the *Whole Creation.*

ANOTHER sort of men there are, who seem to *content themselves* with a loose and general expectation, that *They* shall fare *upon the whole* as well as *Others:* and that the *Multitude* of those who live in the same sensual way with themselves, cannot be *all of them* in a state liable to God's *severe displeasure.* They *hope* therefore, that the *Debaucheries* they are guilty of, will be put to the account of *Natural Infirmities,* and excused as the *Weaknesses* of *Humane Nature in general.* And *Here* they *deceive* themselves by *not considering,* that the very *End and Design* of Christ's Religion, was, *that he might deliver us from this present evil world,* and purchase to himself *a* Peculiar *people zealous of good works:* That we might not *be conformed to This world, but transformed by the renewing of our Mind: That we might prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect Will of God.* They consider not, that, for *This very Reason,* we are commanded, *not to follow a Multitude to do Evil*; not to follow the *customary,* and perhaps *fashionable Vices,* of a degenerate and Corrupt World; but on the contrary to *strive to enter in at the strait Gate,* and to live *worthy of God who has called us unto his Kingdom and Glory.* They consider not, when they comfort themselves in the *Multitude* of Transgressors, that there are many *Thousands in Israel,* whom *They* know

know not of, *which never bowed the Knee to Baal.* And if there were *not*; yet God, who Made and can Destroy all with a Word, and who is able *even out of these Stones to raise up Children unto Abraham*; he, I say, *hath no Need of the sinful man*; and has declared, that *though hand join in hand,* yet *the wicked shall not be unpunished:* Prov. xi. 21.

ANOTHER Delusion, by which wicked men sometimes impose upon themselves, is their observing the *Great Faults*, of which Some very Eminent and Extraordinary Persons are in Scripture recorded to have been guilty. But they consider not at the same time, the *Virtues and Excellencies* of the same persons in the general course of their Lives; the *severe Punishment* God was pleased to inflict upon them, for their particular Offences; and, above all, the *Greatness and Exemplariness* of their *Repentance and Amendment.* The *Penitential* Psalms of *David*, are lasting Evidences upon Record, of the Deepness of his *Repentance and Humiliation:* And the severe Temporal *Punishments* God was pleased to inflict upon him notwithstanding, are sufficient Warnings to prevent the Example of his Faults from being an Encouragement to Sin. *Moses* transgressed against God, in *One* rash Action in the Wilderness: And God said unto him, *Deut.* xxxii. 49; *Get thee up into This Mountain,——and die in the Mount,——as Aaron thy Brother died;——Because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel——in the wilderness of Zin, and sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel.* In like manner King *Hezekiah*; of whom the Scripture says, that * *he did that which was Right in the Sight of the Lord;——so that after him was none*

* 2 Kings xviii. 3, 5.

like

like him among all the Kings of Judah, nor any that were before him; yet, because in *One* remarkable Instance *his heart was lifted up* with Pride, *therefore there was Wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem*, 2 Chr. xxxii. 25. These things (as the Apostle St *Paul* observes) happened unto *Them of old* for *Examples*, and *they are written for Our Admonition, upon whom the Ends of the World are come.* To the *intent that We*, (far from being encouraged by *Their* Offences, to venture upon the like Transgressions;) might on the contrary learn from *Their* Punishment, that God will not be *mocked*: and might take warning in Time to *judge ourselves*, so as not to be finally *judged of the Lord.*

THERE are still *Others*, who *speak peace to themselves* in a *vicious* course of life, upon the mere *general* Notion of the *Mercy* and *Patience* and *Goodness* of *God*; without at all considering, whether they themselves be *proper* and *capable Objects* of his *Mercy* and *Compassion*. And *These* deceive themselves, by fixing their Attention wholly upon *One single* Attribute of the Divine Nature; and consider not God as indued with *all* those Perfections together, which compleat the character of an all-wise and righteous Governour of the Universe. They consider not, that as *Power*, though *infinite*, is still confined to what is the *Object* of *Power*, and extends not at all to the working of contradictions; so *Mercy* likewise, however *infinite*, is still limited to the things which are in their Nature the *Objects* of Mercy. Wherefore, though God *is* indeed Long-suffering and of Great Patience, and allows men Space and Time of Repentance; yet Sin is not at all the less hateful and provoking to him; but his Forbearance when abused, will have an End;

and

and his Wrath will, with greater Severity, be executed upon the Impenitent: And the final Punishment of Sin is not at all the less certain, for being remote and at a distance; seeing one day is with God as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day; and *the Lord knoweth* (as St *Peter* expresses it, 2 *Pet.* ii. 9,) he knoweth *how to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.* Great therefore is the Deceit, and Fatal the Errour, by which all Those delude themselves, who continue in Sin, because God's Mercy (they think) and his Goodness and Compassion abounds. The Danger of *This* Folly, is most affectionately express'd, *Deut.* xxix. 18; *If there be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood, and it come to pass when a man heareth the words of this Curse, that he bless himself in his Heart, saying, I shall have Peace though I walk in the Imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst,* (that is, to add One Sin to another, to continue in the Practice of *Any* known wickedness or Debauchery whatsoever) *The Lord will not spare him, but the Anger of the Lord shall smoke against That Man, and All the Curses that are written in this Book shall lie upon him.*

But the frequentest, and, of all others, the most extensive *Deceits*, are the two following. *First*, a careless misunderstanding of certain Texts of Scripture, wherein Salvation may seem to be promised upon *Other* Terms, than the Practice of Virtue and true Righteousness. And *Secondly*, An imaginary Design of *Future Repentance.*

1st; 'Tis a very common Delusion, for false and corrupt Minds to deceive themselves with a careless misinterpretation of certain Texts of Scripture,

wherein Salvation may seem to be promised upon *Other* terms, than the Practice of Virtue and true Righteousness. Thus when the Scripture declares, that * *the just shall live by* Faith, and that † *a man is justified by* Faith *without the deeds of the Law*; they imagine that a *confident* Belief of perhaps they not what, will bring them to Salvation; Whereas the *Texts* speak of That Obedience of Faith, which is the *Practice of Virtue* required by the *Doctrine*, and supported by the *Belief* of the *Promises* of the *Gospel*. When St *Paul* tells us, that Christ § *is made unto us Righteousness and Sanctification*; they fancy that the Righteousness of *Christ himself*, shall be imputed to *Them*; Whereas the Meaning of the Apostle is, that the Motives and Assistances of the *Gospel of Christ*, are effectually sufficient to reform Mankind, and induce them to becom truly Virtuous and Holy. When the same Apostle assures us, that ‖ *by* Grace *we are saved*; they are willing to suppose, that This signifies the *Absolute and Groundless Favour or Partiality of God*; Whereas the *Grace* There meant, is That *Grace of God which bringeth Salvation* unto *All men*, by *Teaching us, that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World*. And 'tis *Therefore* stiled *Grace*, because the Benefit of it is *graciously* and *mercifully* extended to such as have *formerly* been *wicked*, if they *Now* effectually *reform and amend*.

AGAIN: When the Scripture says, that ‡ *God has from the Beginning chosen us to Salvation*, and that ** *of his Own Will, he begat us with the Word of Truth*, and the like; men of This disposition are

* Rom. i. 17. † Rom. iii. 28. § 1 Cor. i. 30.
‖ Eph. ii. 5. ‡ 2 Th. ii. 13. ** Jam. i. 18.

very

very apt to imagine, that the *Will of God* here spoken of, is Some *particular arbitrary, unalterable, and unconditionate Decree*; Whereas the Apostle plainly means the *Doctrine and Conditions of the Gospel in* general, which by the gracious Will and Good Pleasure of God, are Now declared to be the Terms of Salvation. The *Jews of old* thus flattered themselves, (and with much *more Appearance of Reason*,) that, by the absolute Favour and Determination of God, they were unalterably his Chosen or Elect people. But our Saviour declared to them on the contrary, *Matt.* viii. 11; *Many shall come from the East and West, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven; but the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into outer Darkness.* And St *Paul* in like manner, *Rom.* ii. 6; *God will render to every man according to his Deeds,—to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.* If therefore * *God spared not the Natural Branches,* his *originally elect* people the *Jews*, but *cast them off for their Unbelief*; much more ought the *ingrafted Branches*, as the Apostle by way of Analogy stiles the *Christian* Believers, to *take heed lest he also spare not Them.* For *if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found Sinners*, Gal. ii. 17; it will nothing profit us to have been *from the* Beginning † *chosen unto Salvation, through Sanctification of the Spirit and Belief of the Truth*; when, *in the* End, we *turn this Grace of God into Wantonness*; *and* our *Belief of the Truth* produces not in *Practice* That *Sanctification of the Spirit*, which is the Habit of real Virtue and Righteousness.

* Rom. xi. 21. † 2 Th. ii. 13.

UNDER the *same* head of Deceit, therefore, may be placed the Errour of Those, who, because the Scripture often lays so great a Stress upon the * *Belief of the Truth*, are thence apt to value themselves more upon the *Rightness* of their *Opinions*, than upon the Goodness of their *Morals*: Whereas the *only View*, in which the Scripture ever regards *Belief of the Truth*, is considering it as the *Foundation* of *Virtuous Practice*. Without *which Effect*, not *Right Opinions* only, but also *all Other* Qualifications whatsoever, are in the *Religious estimation* of things, reputed as Nothing. *Though I speak with the tongues of Men and of Angels,—and though I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries and all Knowledge, and though I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have not Charity, (i. e.* an universal Desire of doing what is *Right* and *Good* to All men;) *I am Nothing*: 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

UNDER the *same* Head of Deceit likewise, may be ranked *all Superstitious Commutations* whatsoever; every thing, by which vain men take upon them to supply the want of True Virtue and Goodness; all *Sorceries* or Charms, as St *John* stiles them, *Rev.* xviii. 23, *by which the Nations are Deceived*; Such as are *Processions*, *Pilgrimages*, *Penances*, *Absolutions*, *Extreme Unctions*, and the like: In a word, every thing that *one man* can do *to* or *for* Another, every thing that *Any man* can do for *himself*, any otherwise than by *keeping the Commandments of God* in the Habit of a sober, virtuous, and good Life. For, what Delusions soever, and in whatsoever various Forms, men impose upon themselves; still the Apostle's assertion will for ever remain True: *He* only

* 2 Thess. ii. 13.

that

that Doth Righteousness, is Righteous; and *Whatsoever a man soweth, That shall he also reap.*

2*dly*, THE *Other* of those Two Great Deceits, which I said were of all Others the most frequent and extensive, is an *imaginary Design of Future Repentance.* The Great Doctrine of the Gospel is, that whosoever sincerely and effectually repents, shall obtain remission of his past Sins by virtue of the Redemption and Intercession of Christ. To a World ignorant of the *Will*, and doubtful of the Extent of the *Mercy* of God, This Doctrine was the *Glad Tidings* of Peace and Salvation: An *encouragement*, to Amendment and Reformation; a *New Ground, and Support* of Virtue; A *Grace* or Favour of God, *which brought Salvation*, by *Teaching men, that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, they should* for the future *live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World*, and Thereupon be accepted of God. For *Christians*, to whom the Will of God and the Necessity of Holiness has been clearly revealed, to take from hence an occasion of flattering themselves, that they can indulge themselves in debauched and unrighteous Living, and repent when they think fit; is (in the Apostle's phrase) *turning the Grace of God into Wantonness*, making *Christ the Minister of Sin*, or (in the words of the Text) *deceiving themselves* by *attempting to mock God.* For the *Repentance* spoken of in the Gospel, is not the *Passion*, but the *Virtue* of *Repentance*; 'Tis a Real *Change of Mind*, evidencing itself in such a Real *Amendment of Life and Manners*, as is in Scripture very properly and significantly stiled *The New Man.* Most justly therefore do we condemn those of the *Church of Rome*, when they place imaginary *Penances* and a repeated Circle of *Confessions to the Priest*, in the

room of this *Real Change of Life and Manners*. And (which is of much *greater moment* for *Us* to consider,) no less justly shall *We* also fall into the *same* condemnation, if we place a repeated Circle of *Confession to God himself*, or any thing else whatsoever it be, in the room of *Real Virtue and Amendment of Life*. For, let us not *deceive ourselves*; *God is not mocked: Whatsoever a man soweth, That shall he also reap*.

SERMON

SERMON XVIII.

Of Future Rèwards and Punishments.

MATT. XXV. 46.

And These shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into life eternal.

THESE words, are the conclusion of that moving and most affectionate description, which our Saviour himself gives us of his final coming to judgment. Ver. 31. *When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy Angels with him; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a Shepherd divideth the Sheep from the goats: And he shall set the Sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.* Ver. 34; *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand; Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World.* Ver. 41, *Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand; Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared*

prepared for the devil and his Angels. The *immediate* execution of *Both* which Sentences, is accordingly set forth in the concluding words of the Text: *And These shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into life eternal.*

THE Arguments proper to perswade men to the Practice of Virtue, drawn from the *abstract* consideration of the *Nature* and *Reason* of Things; from the *intrinsick Beauty* and *Excellency* of *Virtue*, and the *Deformity* of *Vice*; from the *Usefulness* and *proper Tendency* of *Virtue* to promote the *general Welfare* of men even in this *present* State, and the *mischievous* Consequences of *Wickedness* and *Debauchery* to the *World:* Arguments, I say, of *this* kind, in their proper place and season, to generous and considerate minds, and in suitable Circumstances of things; *have* in them a *real* Weight of Truth, and carry along with them, when impartially attended to, an undeniable Force of rational Conviction. But in a *corrupt*, and *confused* World; where the Wickedness of *Some*, hinders the Virtue of *Others*, from producing its just and natural Effects; where the *Understandings* of *Many*, are *perplex'd* and *puzzled*; and the *Wills* of *More*, are *biassed* by ill Habits; and where the *Best* are frequently *hated* and *persecuted*, even for the sake of their very *Virtue* itself: In *Such* a confused State, the most *universally* proper, and *only* effectual Motive, to *deter* men from *Vice*, and *perswade* them to their *Duty*; is the laying before them, in a clear and strong Light, the *Rewards* and *Punishments* of a future State. *These shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal.*

THE

THE word, *These*, refers to the *Uncharitable* persons described, ver. 42; *I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye cloathed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.* And the *Righteous* on the contrary, who were to enter into life, are described under the correspondent character of persons exemplarily *charitable:* Ver. 35, *I was an hungred, and ye gave me Meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a Stranger, and ye took me in; Naked, and ye cloathed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.* The Meaning of which Descriptions, is; not, that at the great day of Accounts, the Virtue of Charity *Alone* will be inquired after; but that *Charity* is so eminent and principal a Virtue, one of those *Great Commandments* on which the Law and the Prophets and the whole Gospel lay so particular a Stress, that, by a very easy and common *Figure* of putting a Part for the Whole, it naturally and very expressively represents the *Whole of Religion.* In *Other* places of Scripture, sometimes *Faith*, sometimes *Holiness*, sometimes the *Love*, sometimes the *Fear* of God, according to the particular occasion upon which it is introduced, signifies, without Any ambiguity, the same as *Virtue in general.* And *here* in like manner, because in representing the Solemnity of the Last Judgment, the descriptions of a *charitable* or *uncharitable* Behaviour are in their nature very *affectionate* Images, and apt most *strongly* to *move* the Hearers; for This reason (I presume) our Saviour chose to set forth under those *particular* Images, the Two *General* characters of the *Righteous* and the *Wicked* at the Great Day. The *full* Sense therefore

of

of this Declaration of our Saviour, (*These shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal,*) is, that at the great and final Judgment, every man shall be recompenced, in a proportionable State either of Happiness or Misery, according to the *Nature* and the *Degree* of his *Works*. The Impious and the Profane, the Blasphemer and the Idolater, the unrighteous and unjust, the Tyrant and the Oppressour, the unholy and the unclean, the hard-hearted and uncharitable, and the Workers of *Every* iniquity, inconsistent with the *Love of God* and *Charity towards Men*: these he shall condemn to everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his Majesty. On the *other* hand, all virtuous and good men, all just and righteous and religious persons, who, from the Beginning of their Lives, or from the time of their breaking off their Sins by Repentance; either under the Light of *Nature*, after the Example of *Enoch*, *Noah*, *Job*, and the *Patriarchs* of old; or under the *Law*, with *Moses* and the *Prophets*; or under the Knowledge of the *Gospel*, with the *Apostles and Followers of our Lord*; have sincerely endeavoured to found all their Actions upon a Principle of Love and Piety towards *God*, and of Righteousness, Truth, and *Charity* towards *Men*; these he shall reward with everlasting Glory, in the eternal Kingdom of his Father. The Former *shall go away into everlasting Punishment*; *but these Righteous into Life eternal.*

THE *Beginning* of these *Rewards and Punishments*, as they are founded partly in the *natural consequences* of things, is *cotemporary* with the *Practice itself* of Virtue or Vice. For in this *present life*, besides the *Benefits* of *Virtue* to *Mankind in general*, and the *destructive*

structive Consequences of *Vice* to the *World*; the Happiness of every *particular* man's *own* mind has necessarily a very great dependence upon that *Conscience* of Good and Evil, which unavoidably attends virtuous or vicious Actions. In the *intermediate separate State* between Death and Judgment, when the Vanities of this deceitful World shall be at an end, and the Delusions and False Colours here put upon things shall all entirely disappear; the natural Effects and Impressions made by virtuous or vicious Habits upon the minds of men, will be still more lively and sensible. Besides; In That State, the Righteous cannot but be very happy, through the certain *expectation* of that Crown of Righteousness, which they know the Lord the Righteous Judge shall give them at That day; And the Wicked, on the contrary, cannot but be made very miserable, by a *certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation*, though the irreversible Sentence shall not be actually executed upon them before the Great Day. These therefore are, in their several kinds and degrees, attestations given to the Divine Justice by the *Nature and Truth* of *Things*, and by mens own *Consciences*, *anticipating* the Righteous Judgment of God. But the *final* and *unalterable* distribution of Rewards and Punishments, in exactness of Weight and Measure, according to the unerring decisions of Omniscient Justice; will not be made, 'till our Lord's passing That judicial Sentence in the Great Day of Accounts, in consequence of which *The Wicked shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal.*

THE *Sense* and *Meaning* of the words is plain and obvious, so that they have little need of particular *Explication*: But the *Weight* and *Importance* of them

is

ſuch, that they can never be too *frequently* and ſeriouſly *meditated* upon. Yet ſo it is, that even the *Plainneſs* and *Clearneſs itſelf* of this moſt important of All Doctrines, is probably often the occaſion of mens neglecting to attend to it. For as the *ſtrongeſt Objects*, which make perpetually an equal and continued Impreſſion upon our Senſes, are apt, by reaſon of their conſtant Preſence, to affect us little more, than if they made No impreſſion upon the Senſe at all: And as the daily Inſtances of *Mortality*, which ought continually to remind us what we muſt ſpeedily expect, do by an habitual Careleſneſs, reconcile men in ſuch manner to the Sight of it in Others, as if themſelves were not at all concerned in the Example: So, with regard to the *Rewards and Puniſhments of a Future State*, the *Doctrine in general* is lookt upon as ſo ſettled and eſtabliſhed among Chriſtians, that men care not to be reminded or to remind themſelves of That, which they think they already very well know, and in which there is no room for new Inſtruction. Hence their Knowledge, without Meditation, becomes very like unto Ignorance; becauſe it has No Effect, and makes no Impreſſion: 'Tis like the Speculative Knowledge, of a Truth not attended to; like the habitual Underſtanding of a Demonſtration, never recollected. In order to remedy *This* evil, the Scripture ſets forth to us both the *Judgment* in general, and the future *Rewards* and *Puniſhments* in *particular*; under great variety of the *ſtrongeſt Images*, and of the moſt *lively*, *moving*, and *affectionate Deſcriptions*. In *general*: *God*, ſaith St *Paul*, *will render to every man according to his deeds*; *To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality*; *eternal life*:

But

But to them that are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness; indignation and wrath: Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile, Rom. ii. 6: And the *manner* of the *Solemnity*, he *thus* describes, 1 *Thess.* iv. 16; *The Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the Trump of God; And the dead in Christ shall rise first.* Our *Saviour*, in his *own* account of this matter, expresses himself *thus*; *John* v. 28, *All that are in the graves, shall hear his Voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the Resurrection of Life; and they that have done evil, unto the Resurrection of Damnation:* And the *manner* of the *Solemnity*, he thus describes; in the Beginning of That account, whereof my Text is the conclusion; *When the Son of man* (says he) *shall come in his glory, and all the Holy Angels with him, then shall he sit upon the Throne of his glory; And before him shall be gathered all Nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a Shepherd divideth the Sheep from the Goats.* The Prophet *Daniel*, in the sublime prophetick style, foretells the final Judgment thus; ch. xii. 2, *Many of them that sleep in the dust of the Earth, shall awake; some to everlasting Life, and some to Shame and everlasting Contempt:* And the *manner of the Solemnity*, He *thus* describes; *I beheld till the Thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit; whose Garment was white as the Snow, and the Hair of his Head like the pure Wool; His Throne was like the fiery Flame, and his Wheels as burning Fire: A fiery Stream issued and came forth from before him; Thousand Thousands ministred unto him, and ten thousand times*

ten thousand stood before him; *the Judgment was set, and the Books were opened*; ch. vii. 9.

THIS in *general*. In *particular*: As to the *Happiness* of the *Righteous* at That day; Though we Now *know* only *in part, and prophesie in part*; and *see* but *through a glass, darkly*; and *it doth not yet appear, what we shall be*; because *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entred into the Heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love him*; Yet the various *Images* and *Similitudes*, by which the Scripture sets forth to us this State of Blessedness, are such as represent it under the highest Characters, of *fulness of joy*, and *pleasures for evermore*; of an *eternal Weight of glory*; of a *Kingdom that cannot be moved*; of a *City, whose Builder and Maker is God*; of an *Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away*; where *neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal*; where *they that* have been *wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament*; *and they that* have *turned Many to righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever*; where *the Righteous shall shine forth as the Sun, in the Kingdom of their Father*; where the *Spirits of just men made perfect*, That *general Assembly and Church of the First-born which are written in Heaven*, shall converse for ever with *the innumerable Company of Angels*, and with *Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant*, and with *God* himself *the Judge of all*; and *they shall see his Face, and his Name shall be in their foreheads*; and *they shall be before the throne of God, and shall serve him day and night in his temple*; They *shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the Sun light on them, nor any Heat*; *for God shall wipe away all*

Tears

Tears from their Eyes, and there shall be no more Death, neither Sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more Pain; for the former things are passed away.

ON the *other* hand, though we know not distinctly the exact *particulars* of the *Punishment* of the *Wicked* in the future State; yet This we may be well assured of, that it is not a *mere empty Threatning*, that the *Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not* (that is, who *acknowledge not) God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his Power.* Nor is it without just reason, that the Scripture, in order to deter men from Sin, sets forth this Punishment to us under the *severe* representation, of an *everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels*; where *the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched*; where *shall be Weeping and gnashing of Teeth*; where they *shall drink of the Wrath of God, poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone; and the Smoke of their Torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no Rest, day nor night.* Insomuch that our Saviour, as it were *overlooking* temporal Death, as being comparatively Nothing; says concerning *Such* persons, that they *shall not* Taste *of Death, till they see the Son of man coming in his Kingdom.*

SOME *Unbelievers*, willingly mistaking the Sense of these Threatnings, as they *love* to mistake every thing else in Scripture; have endeavoured to draw an argument from hence against the *Truth of the Gospel*, as if it represented God under a character more *severe*,

than is consistent with the essential Attributes of his Nature. And indeed some *Christian* Writers, in their heedless Systems, and unwarranted Accounts of God's Proceedings, it must be confessed, have given but too just occasion for such an Objection; when, after having set forth, in *Scripture-expressions*, the severest Denunciations of the divine Vengeance against the Great Enemies of God and Goodness, against the unrighteous and the profane, against the profligate and the debauched, against the obstinately wicked and incorrigible; immediately, *without* any warrant at all from *Scripture*, nay, in direct *contradiction to it*; they suppose the *same* tremendous Punishment to be inflicted, upon *infants* who never actually sinned, or upon men *reprobated* by the mere arbitrary Will of God, or upon All who follow not such or such *Particular Sects* or *Doctrines of Men*, or *promiscuously and without Distinction* upon *all sorts* and *degrees* of *Sinners* who shall not attain unto the Happiness of Heaven. But the *Scripture* does not so speak. We *There* find, that *the Judge of the Whole Earth will do what is Right*: That the final wrath of God shall be inflicted upon all impenitent Offenders, not promiscuously, but in weight and measure, precisely according to every one's Deserts: That it shall be *more tolerable in the day of Judgment for* Some, than for Others who *shall receive a* greater *condemnation*: That Some *shall be beaten with Few stripes*, and Others *with Many*: That the Punishment of *All*, shall be inflicted *in the presence of the Holy Angels, and in the presence of the Lamb*; who shall accordingly be Witnesses of the Justness and of the Equity of its proportions: That God therefore will be thoroughly *justified in his Sayings, and clear when he is judged*:

That

That *every mouth shall be stopped before him*; that is, shall have nothing to object against the reasonableness of his Proceedings: And that, when *he cometh with ten thousand of his Saints, to execute judgment upon All*; he shall *convince* Sinners, not only of *all their ungodly deeds*, but of their *hard Speeches* also *which they have spoken against him.* And this is a full Answer to the Objection raised by *Some* Unbelievers, from the *Severity* of the Divine Threatnings as expressed in the *New Testament.*

ANOTHER Sort of them there are, who will pretend that *Virtue* ought to be chosen for its *own* sake; and that when 'tis practised through Hope of *Reward* or Fear of *Punishment*, it ceases to have the Nature of Virtue. But in *This* also, they greatly err. For tho' Virtue *is* indeed very excellent and amiable in itself, and what a reasonable Agent cannot but always acknowledge to be his Duty to choose; yet if God has not annexed to it any sufficient encouragement, to support men effectually in that Choice; it would follow that the *Nature of things*, and the *final Dispositions of Providence*, were an inconsistency; It being indeed neither *possible* nor *truly reasonable*, that men by adhering to virtue should at any time lose their Lives, if thereby they were to deprive themselves eternally of all possibility of receiving any Benefit from That Adherence. 'Tis very fit therefore, that what is in its *own nature* good and excellent, should at the same time be supported and encouraged, by *Him* who is *essentially Good* and *Powerful over All.* Besides, that the *Rewards*, which *He* proposes, have in their *Nature* a just and proper *congruity*, and are of the *same Kind* with *virtue itself.* For which reason, the Ancient Worthies in Scripture are never

blamed

blamed, but *commended* for *ſeeking a better country, that is, an heavenly:* And even *Moſes* had *reſpect unto the recompence of Reward:* Nay, and *our Lord* himſelf, *for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the Croſs, deſpiſing the Shame, and is ſat down at the right hand of the Throne of God.*

Laſtly, OTHERS there are, who have preſumptuouſly taken upon them to argue, that, according to *Their* notions of the Divine Goodneſs, *All* Creatures ſhould be made capable of *Happineſs only*, and *None* of them liable to fall into *Miſery*. But *then* it would follow, that God had *no Right* to create *Any* rational or *free* Agents at all. For where-ever there is *Freedom*, (except only in *God himſelf*, who is by nature *eſſentially* and *immutably* Good; where-ever elſe, I ſay, there is *Freedom*,) in *whatever* proportion and Degree it be, there *muſt* be accordingly a Power of chooſing *Evil* as well as *Good*; And where there is no poſſibility of *Diſobedience*, there can be properly no *Obedience* neither; nor *Any Virtue*, where there is no room for *Vice*. Sufficient it is, that God, the Supreme Judge and Governour of All, will deal with every one *proportionally* according to their reſpective Circumſtances; and will finally puniſh even incorrigible Wickedneſs itſelf, not arbitrarily, but according to its juſt Deſerts; and in ſuch manner as ſhall appear to become *Him*, who is *All-Wiſe* and *Good* as well as *All-Powerful*, to act in his Government of the Univerſe. *Wiſd.* xii. 12; *Who ſhall accuſe thee for the nations that periſh, whom thou haſt made? or who ſhall come to ſtand againſt thee to be revenged for the unrighteous men?*——*Forſomuch as thou art righteous thyſelf, thou ordereſt all things righteouſly;*

ously; thinking it not agreeable with thy Power, to condemn him that hath not deserved to be punished.

THE *Application* of the *Whole* of what has been said, is briefly as follows. In general: If it be agreeable to *Reason*, that there *should* be future Rewards and Punishments; and from *Scripture*, certain that there *shall* be such: Then ought we, with St *Peter*, to infer; *What manner of persons ought we to be, in all Holy conversation and godliness!* Then more particularly, with regard to *wicked* men; *knowing the Terrour of the Lord, we* ought continually to *perswade* them, that they *treasure* not *up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous Judgment of God.* Always reminding them of our Saviour's Admonition; *I will forewarn you Whom you shall fear; fear Him, who after he has killed, is able to destroy both Soul and Body in Hell; yea, I say unto you, fear Him:* And, *if thine Eye offend thee,* (that is, if any thing very dear and valuable to thee, cause thee to sin;) *pluck it out, and cast it from thee; It is better for thee to enter into the Kingdom of God with One eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell-fire; where the worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched.*

LIKEWISE, with regard to *Good* men; we may from the same ground perpetually exhort them, *to look, not at the things that are temporal, but at the things that are eternal:* Considering, that *the afflictions of this present time, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed hereafter.* For, * *the Souls of the Righteous* (as the Author of the Book of *Wisdom* affectionately expresses it) *are in the hand of God,*

* Wisd. iii. 1; v. 15.

and

and there shall no torment touch them: In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die, and their departure is taken for misery: But——in the time of their Visitation they shall shine, and run to and fro like sparks among the Stubble: They shall judge the nations, and have dominion over the people, and their Lord shall reign for ever. Then the Wicked, *groaning for anguish of Spirit, shall say; We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour: How is he numbred among the children of God, and his lot is among the Saints! We have erred from the way of truth, and—— wearied ourselves in the way of wickedness and destruction: But the righteous live for evermore; their Reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the most high.*

The End of VOLUME VII.